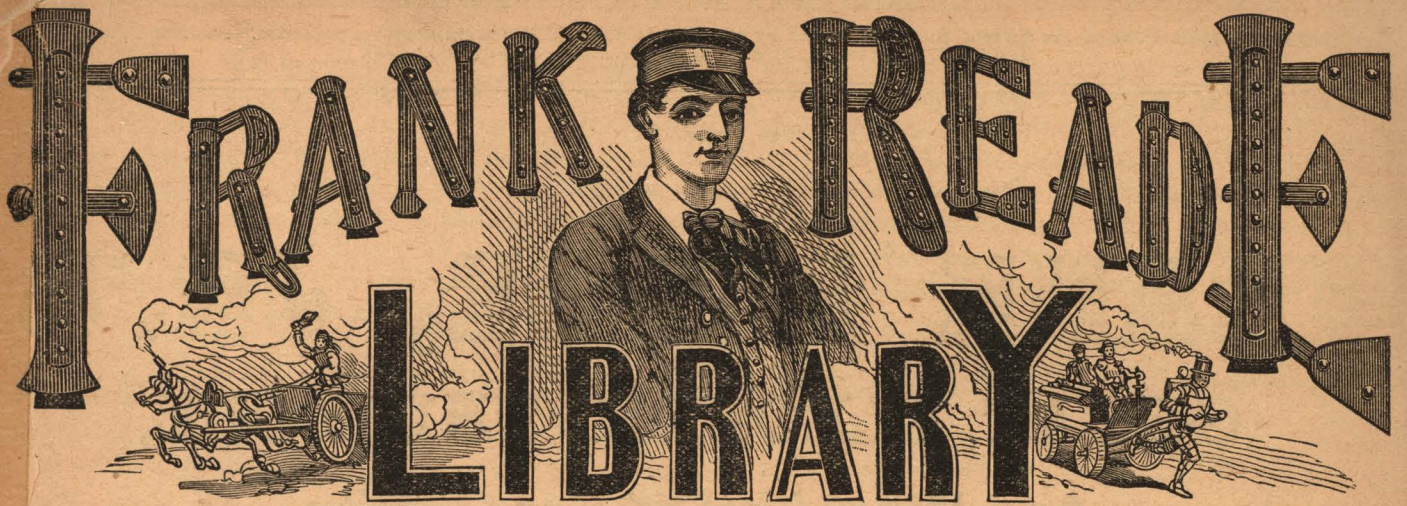


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# FRANK READE, JR.'S GREAT ELECTRIC TRICYCLE, AND WHAT HE DID FOR CHARITY.

By "NONAME."





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# FRANK READE, JR.'S

## GREAT ELECTRIC TRICYCLE,

### And What He Did For Charity.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr.'s Latest Air Wonder the 'Kite'; or, A Six Weeks' Flight Over the Andes," etc.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### YOUNG FRANK READE BUILDS HIMSELF AN ELECTRIC TRICYCLE.

THE bicycle craze came several years ago, and has not gone away yet. It is still with us, and all sorts of bicycles have popped up into popular favor. Bicycle clubs were organized all over the country, and many extraordinary feats were performed on some of them. So many miles in a given time were heralded from city to city, and everybody tried to beat the time as recorded.

At last the various clubs in the country got up a national convention, to be held in the city of Chicago. Every club was to send one or more delegates, according to the number of members they had.

Frank Reade, Jr., of Readestown, son of the famous inventor, was then about nineteen years old. He had already developed a wonderfully inventive genius. As the reader well knows, he has since become so famous that all the world has heard of him.

When he heard that the bicyclists were going to hold a convention in Chicago he resolved to attend it. He had a splendid bicycle, which his father had made him a present of on his last birthday, and had mastered the art of managing it. But there was no club in Readestown. Only a half-dozen young fellows in the town had bicycles, and such a thing as a club had never been thought of.

"I can't go as a delegate," said Frank to himself one day, as he was thinking over the matter, "that's certain. But I can go on my own hook, and I'll do it. I guess I know as much about bicycles as any other boy."

"Why don't you get up something new for the convention?" his father asked him one day. "I wouldn't go there on a regulation bicycle, just as all the others will. Get up something new—something that will make their heads swim and give you a name."

Frank, Jr., scratched his head, as if puzzled, and said:

"That would be a good idea, father; but what shall it be?"

"Try to think up something in the bicycle line, of course. Don't go there like a common booby."

Frank went to sleep that night after lying awake several hours, thinking over what his father had suggested. When he came down to breakfast the next morning, he had a head on him as if he had been up all night.

"Why, you look like an old bum this morning, Frank," said his father, as he took his accustomed seat at the table. "Were you out late last night?"

"Never went out of the house," was the reply.

"Guess you sat up late," remarked his father, as he helped him to a slice of ham.

"Went to bed at ten o'clock," said Frank, rubbing his eyes.

His father looked hard at him.

"I had on my thinking cap last night, father," said Frank, Jr. "That's what's the matter with me. I've got bicycle and tricycle on the brain."

"Oh!" and his father indulged in a hearty laugh.

"Well, what is the result of your thinking? I like to see a man think to some purpose."

"I am going to try my hand on an electric tricycle," said the young hopeful.

Frank Reade, Sr., opened his eyes in astonishment.

"You are getting quite elevated in your ideas," he remarked.

"Yes—I am going to ride over that convention, right up to the top of the heap."

"All right. I like that kind of ambition. Resolve to excel in everything you do, and if you don't succeed you will come pretty close to it. Have you got your plans all arranged yet?"

"No, sir. I've only got the *idea*. I shall go to work on it after breakfast."

"Well, when you want any assistance from me, either in the matter of money or advice, let me know."

"Thanks, father. I want to do it all by myself if I can."



"That's right. Accustom yourself to rely on your own resources. That is one of the first lessons a young man should learn—and he should learn it *well* while about it."

After breakfast Frank, Jr., went up-stairs to his room and went to work on his drawing materials. He had a table covered with drawings in a little while, and the drawings were those of a first-class hand, too. He inherited the inventive genius of his father, and he went to work systematically, as he had seen his father do.

In a couple of days he had the drawings completed, and submitted them to his father.

Frank Reade, Sr., looked admiringly at them.

"They look beautiful, Frank," he said. "So you are going to have a tricycle instead of bicycle?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, the bicyclists won't let you in on that, you know."

"Not as a member of the convention. But I don't care for that. I'll have something that will leave them behind when they go parading round town."

"Yes, that's the idea—something that will beat 'em for speed, good looks, and splendid mechanism."

"That's it. I'll just take the shine right off of them, and show them that they can't leave me behind."

Father and son laughed over the affair for some time, and then settled down to the *minutiae* of the drawing.

"Two nickel-plated wheels 4 1-2 feet in diameter," said Frank, Jr., describing the drawing to his father, who held the board in his hands, "four feet apart. Front wheels 2 1-2 feet high, six feet forward: electric battery half-way between rear and forward wheels, under driver's feet. Two piston-rods connect with elbowed axle and propel the thing. Very simple, after all," and the young inventor laughed confidently over his plan.

"Very good—very good indeed," said Frank Reade, Sr. "Splendid idea. How many revolutions to the minute do you expect the driving wheels to make?"

"I don't know. Have not made any calculations as to the speed. But I am sure of beating anything that will appear at that convention."

"Of course, but you won't have any friends among them."

"Oh, I'll have friends enough when I show them what I can do," and the young hero went to work on his machine. He had the wheels made in Chicago—in fact, everything was made there under his supervision except the electric arrangement. That he and his father made in the home workshop at Readestown.

When the parts were finished and ready to put together, they were shipped to Readestown, to Frank Reade, Jr., who received them and had them carefully unpacked at home.

Barney and Pomp, the two faithful servants and followers of the elder Reade in many of his wonderful adventures, were still with the Reade family. They were both ready at all times to aid the young inventor in any of his undertakings. By their help young Frank soon had the electric tricycle up, and the electric battery in its place.

The battery occupied a small space under the two arms that supported the forward wheel, about half-way between that and the rear wheels. Above it was a small platform for the rider's feet.

Between the two big wheels was a seat somewhat like that of a gig or sulky, so common many years ago in the country. On either side of the seat, like the arms of an arm-chair, were inclosed boxes in which the elbows of the axle revolved when the tricycle was in motion.

Each of the wheels had solid rubber bands an inch thick, which fitted into the groove snugly, and caused them to give forth but little sound when running. Under the seat was an extra pair of bands and tools to be used in case of accident, or anything getting out of order. There was also room for provisions and any other things one might wish so take along on a journey. Besides that a place where a large valise could be strapped was provided.

"Dat's a mighty nice gig, Marse Frank," said Pomp, shaking his woolly head. "But I doan' know 'bout dat hoss."

"Ah, the horse is all right, Pomp," said the elder Reade, laughing. "Electricity can be controlled better than some horses I've seen."

"Mebbe so," said Pomp. "Dis heah chile doan' want no foolin' round no lightnin'. Dat 'ar electricity ain't nuffin' but lightnin'. No ole hoss cain't kick like dat—ugh!" and he gave a shudder, as if the bare thought made him feel chilly.

When everything was in its place, Frank, Jr., examined the cranks that regulated the electricity, as well as the guide-wheel and brakes. He saw that they were in perfect order.

Then he ordered the door of the workshop to be opened, so the tricycle could run out if he wished it to do so.

Then he seated himself on the comfortable seat and turned on the electricity.

The great driving wheels at once revolved, and the tricycle moved gracefully out of the shop into the yard.

"De Lor' Gorrarnighty!" exclaimed Pomp, "dat beats all de buggies in de worl' for a fac'!"

"Bedad!" ejaculated Barney O'Shea, "it's the horse-flesh as won't sell for a song when they see that thing, sure."

"Dat's er fac'," assented Pomp.

Young Frank rode round and round in the yard, making short curves in every direction, and found that every joint in the machine worked smoothly.

"Why, father!" he exclaimed, in a gay humor, "it's as gentle as old Bob!"

Old Bob was the family carriage-horse, as old as young Frank himself.

"Yes," said his father; "but it can kick a thousand times worse than old Bob; so you can't be too careful. Remember that electricity is nothing else but lightning, and that one shock will cause instant death."

"Oh, I've arranged it so that none of it can get into the steel of the seat. It rests on non-conductors all round."

"Well, that was sensible."

"But I can throw the current into every other part of it by turning this little crank here," and he showed him the little silver-plated handle of the crank which controlled the terrible power in the little battery underneath.

"Ah! That is a splendid guard. How did you come to think of that?"

"Oh, I have an idea that some smart Aleck would like to run away with it at the convention. I'll just keep a



moderate current running round it—just strong enough to knock out a rascal or two. I guess nobody will get away with it while I am asleep."

Frank Reade, Sr., laughed heartily at the idea, and then suddenly looked serious.

"See here, my boy," he said. "You can't be too careful with that thing. If any one should lose his life by it you would be lynched. Just look out what you are doing."

"Oh, I'll be careful, father. Don't worry about me," and the young inventor went spinning around the yard again.

His father watched him for some time in silent interest, and then said:

"I think you have hit it right, Frank, and that you will create a sensation at the convention. You must not blow any, however, but be as modest as you can."

"Why, father!" exclaimed Frank, Jr., "I haven't any cheek, you know."

Frank, Sr., looked at him and smiled, saying:

"I guess you have enough to pull through on, my son, only I don't want you to travel on it, that's all."

"Oh, no danger of that. I'm going to travel on this tricycle awhile."

His father smiled, and muttered something about his being a chip of the old block, and then turned and slowly strolled back to the house.

"Pomp!" called Frank, Jr.

"Sah!"

"Open that gate."

"Gwine ter let her go, Marse Frank?"

"Yes; I'm going to see what she can do."

Pomp opened the gate that led out into the street.

Frank turned the forward wheel in that direction, and the tricycle passed out gently as an old family horse.

Readestown stood on the edge of a broad, level prairie, which stretched southward some two hundred miles or more.

Once in the streets, one could go many a mile without reaching an elevation of ten feet. It was almost a dead level as far as the eye could reach.

Out on this dead level of prairie-land our young hero resolved to try the speed of his invention. He turned in that direction and started for the edge of the town. The small urchins in the streets caught sight of the strange machine, and made a rush for it.

"Hi, hi, hi!" yelled a dozen of them. "Look at that! Give us a ride!"

Frank let on more electricity, and away the tricycle went at an increased speed. He held the steering crank firmly, and managed to dodge the small boys. In another minute he was out of the town, and bounding over the smooth level prairie.

Then it was that he turned on a still stronger current, and the effect was truly wonderful. The tricycle darted forward with the speed of a deer. The wind made his hair stand out straight from his head.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "This beats the Readestown & Chicago Railroad! This must be at the rate of twenty miles an hour, and it isn't her best, either."

Away she went, the wheels making no more noise on the soft grass than the tread of a specter.

Suddenly a rabbit sprung up and darted away.

"Hip-hip-hurra!" yelled Frank, "I'll give you a race, old cotton tail!" and he turned in pursuit of the fleeing timid creature.

On finding himself pursued, the rabbit laid his ears back on his shoulders and got down to business. He stretched himself at full length at every leap, and went over the green grass faster than he ever did before in his life.

"Hi, hi, hi—go it, cotton tail!" yelled Frank at the top of his voice, as he saw the rabbit doing its level best.

But, go as fast as he could, the little animal saw that he was being gained upon. His terror was unbounded. The rabbit is naturally a very timid creature. His only way of saving himself from any danger is by flight. It's a fast dog that can catch one of them in a fair race.

By and by Frank saw that the poor creature was weakening—that his strength and wind were going.

"Good-bye, cotton tail!" he exclaimed. "Take a drop on yourself," and he turned off to the left, and let the rabbit get away.

"Bully!" he exclaimed, in the highest glee. "I'd like to start up a deer and give him a race. Hanged if I don't believe that I can outrun anything on four feet. Why, hello! I'm at least five miles from town! Whew! but that's fast traveling!" and he came to a full stop, and looked back toward Readestown, which could plainly be seen in the distance.

"That was a good run," he said. "Much better than I ever dreamed of making. I'll take another run back, and see how long it will take me to make it. I guess it's all of five miles back there," and he looked at his watch before making the start.

Then he turned on the electric current. The tricycle moved off, gaining speed with each revolution of the wheels, till he seemed to be fairly flying over the dead level of the green prairie.

On, on he went, till he seemed scarcely to touch the ground.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "This will make those bicycle fellows green with envy. They'll wish me in Halifax forty times a minute after I lay 'em all out on the grand parade."

As he neared the village, he saw half a hundred boys and men there to welcome him. They made the welkin ring with their shouts, for he had kept the matter a profound secret from all his neighbors and friends.

"Over twenty miles an hour!" he exclaimed, looking at his watch when he came to a halt. "That'll do. I'm satisfied. Come on with your bicycles!"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ELECTRIC TRICYCLE IN CHICAGO—THE PARADE OF THE WHEELMEN.

OF course the electric tricycle was the talk of the town. Every man, woman, and child in Readestown had to see it, and they never seemed to get tired looking at it. Then all the youths and maidens wanted to ride on it. But that was impossible, for it was made to carry but one at a time, and Frank would not permit any one else to manage it.

"It's a dangerous thing to meddle with," he said. "I



can't allow anybody else to touch it. Electricity is nothing less than chained lightning, and if it should get loose, good-bye to you."

"But what are you going to do with it?" a dozen asked at once.

"Ride on it," was the reply.

"Oh!" and they all laughed.

"I made it to beat those bicycle fellows," he added, after joining in the laugh with the crowd.

"And you can do it, too!" cried one of the party.

"Of course I can. I've done it already. No bicycle can keep up with me on this thing," and he patted the tricycle as a trooper would pat his petted charger.

The news was telegraphed all over the country that Frank Reade, Jr., son of the famous inventor of the "Steam Tally-ho," and other wonderful pieces of mechanism, had just invented an electric tricycle, propelled by electricity, which, as the test proved, could make a speed of from twenty to thirty miles per hour.

That set all the bicyclists in the United States wild.

Telegrams came pouring in from a dozen States, addressed to Frank Reade, Jr., asking if he really had invented an electric tricycle. He telegraphed to a Chicago paper, in answer to all, that he had such an invention on hand, and had made twenty miles an hour with it on the prairie.

Then letters came pouring in asking a thousand and one questions about it—whether he would sell it or make another like it for pay.

Of course he could not answer all the letters, and did not try to. Life was too short.

He busied himself practicing with it for two or three weeks, so as to become expert in handling it. He wanted to be a perfect master of it when he went to Chicago with it.

One day Pomp stood by the side of the tricycle, with both hands on the wheel.

Frank slowly turned on a current of electricity, and the next moment a wild yell burst from the faithful old darkey, and he was knocked nearly ten feet away.

"Oh, Lor' sabe us!" he groaned, as he pulled himself together again. "I'se done broke all ter pieces."

"Why, what's the matter with you, Pomp?" Frank asked, looking as innocent as a lamb.

"Dat 'lectric hoss done kicked me ter def, Marse Frank," he replied, rubbing himself all over to find out where he was hurt.

"Nonsense! the thing hasn't moved an inch in an hour. Has it, Barney?"

"No, bedad. The naygur is afther being off his nut," and Barney, really not knowing what had hurt Pomp, came up and caught hold of the wheel just as Pomp had done.

A wild Irish yell resounded through the village, and Barney lay on his back near Pomp's feet, the worst scared man that ever lived.

Pomp tumbled at once.

A broad grin illumined his ebon face, and a series of chuckles rolled from his thick lips that set Barney wild.

The Irishman pulled himself together, and yelled:

"Whoop! Ould Ireland foriver! Come on, ye black

naygur, till I bate the hed off av ye!" and he danced wildly around Pomp.

"Oh, come off, Barney!" cried Frank, laughing till tears coursed down his cheeks. "What's Pomp got to do with it? Tackle this tricycle if you want to get even."

"Bedad, thin, it's me shillelah I'll take to that same," and he started to his quarters to get his Irish black-thorn.

Pomp and Frank fairly roared.

Barney turned and looked at them. He saw that the joke was on him in some shape, and thought it best to accept the situation.

But he was totally unable to appreciate the joke, and so he did not smile. He went to his quarters to make a more thorough examination of himself, and find out where he was hurt.

The time came at last when Frank had to set out for Chicago in order to be on hand when the convention convened. He packed a valise full of clothes, and strapped it on behind the seat, ready to start at sunrise the next morning.

The distance from Readestown to Chicago was about three hundred miles. The country was level, and the roads good at that season. There were several rivers to cross, but good bridges spanned all of them.

"I guess I can make nearly as good time as the railroads," said Frank, "if I don't make any mistakes and take the wrong road, which any one is liable to do."

He kissed his mother and sisters good-bye, shook hands with his father, Barney and Pomp, and then mounted the tricycle.

Just as the sun was peeping above the horizon he turned on the current of electricity and started off. The entire population of Readestown had turned out to see him off.

They made the welkin ring with shouts as he moved away, and when they saw him make a spurt and forge ahead like a startled deer, they gave three times three and a tiger.

The morning was balmy, the road level and free from stone. He went ahead at the rate of twenty miles an hour. The telegraph had flashed the news that he was coming. As he reached the first village, about an hour after his start, he found that they were expecting him. The excited people compelled him to stop and let them see the wonderful machine that made the best horse ashamed of himself.

But he remained there but ten minutes. Then he was off again, going faster than ever, trying to make up for the lost time. He made ten miles on a dead run without a check or turn over a smooth, level road. He met a number of teams, the drivers of which stood aghast at the strangest machine they had ever seen on the road. They stopped their teams, and gazed after the tricycle as long as it could be seen.

When night overtook him he had made about one hundred and fifty miles, an average of about fifteen miles per hour, including stoppages.

"It would have taken a horse four days to do that at ordinary rate of travel," he said to the landlord of the hotel where he put up. "A bicyclist could do it in two days, perhaps. I am as fresh as when I started."



"It's as good as a railroad any fair day," said the landlord. "But how about traveling when the mud is heavy?"

"I don't know," was the frank reply. "But I think it would beat the bicycles, anyhow."

He left the tricycle standing in front of the hotel, where some two hundred people were gazing at it. To protect it from meddlesome characters, he turned on a pretty good current of electricity, which charged everything except the seat. A very officious village oracle took hold of it with both hands. The next moment he was knocked all in a heap, as if a thunderbolt had struck him.

A groan escaped him as he pulled himself together.

"The electricity is loose," he said; "stand out of the way, boys."

The crowd scattered, and the victim of officiousness staggered into the hotel, madder than a wet hen.

"Why didn't you say the blamed thing was charged?" he fiercely demanded of the young inventor.

"Oh, you've been meddling, have you?" Frank asked. "Didn't you see a notice—'Hands Off'—on the tricycle?"

"Yes, but——"

"Well, you took your hands off, did you not?"

"No. They were knocked off, and so was I. For two cents I'd knock your nose off your face."

"I don't think you would find that a good investment," remarked the young inventor, who knew that he had the law on his side.

The crowd laughed at the fellow, but kept away from the tricycle. They did not care to get knocked out as he had been.

The next morning, bright and early, Frank was off. He intended to reach Chicago that night. The roads were good, weather fine, and everything propitious.

Every village he passed through hurraed and cheered him on his way. They had all heard of his famous father, and of this famous invention by the son. They saw him and his machine, and were satisfied.

Out on the road about a couple of miles from a beautiful little village, he met a hunter with a pack of dogs. The hunter stood by the roadside to look at him as he passed. Not so the dogs. The full pack yelped and made a dash for the tricycle. The result was that one of them was run over and badly hurt.

The hunter was furious.

He yelled to Frank:

"Stop, you young imp, and pay for that dog!"

"I don't want the dog," replied the young inventor.

The enraged hunter leveled his gun at him, and cried out:

"Stop, or I'll fire!"

"Blaze away!" said Frank, who knew that he was out of reach of the charge.

"Bang!" went the gun.

Frank stood up in his seat and waved his hat at the irate hunter.

The hunter swore like a pirate, but the young inventor went on his way rejoicing.

People who saw him go by rubbed their eyes and looked again, thinking they might have been mistaken. They saw him sitting quietly on the seat holding to the helm.

The old farmers were the worst puzzled of all the men he

met on the way. They could not understand how the thing worked.

At last the great city of Chicago came into view. Frank could see it many miles away.

He knew where to go, for he was very familiar with Chicago. One of the leading hotels was his stopping place, and thither he went.

As he went along one of the great streets he had to slow up, as fast driving was not permitted. Hundreds of bicyclists had already arrived, as the convention was to meet on the morrow. Everybody was on the lookout for the electric tricycle. They had read of it in the city papers. None were more anxious or eager than the bicyclists themselves.

Thus it happened that a great crowd ran along both sides of the street, cheering wildly as the young inventor rode down toward his hotel.

"Hi, hi, hi!" yelled the small boy, running here and there and everywhere. "Hyer she comes—the boss rig, cullies!"

On reaching the hotel, the proprietor, who knew Frank and his father well, met and took charge of him.

"You have made a quick trip, Mr. Reade," he said to the young hero. "I hope you are not much fatigued?"

"Oh, I'm all right. Never felt better in my life. Give us a good supper, for I'm as hungry as a wolf."

Having charged the tricycle so as to keep meddling hands off, he left it in the charge of the hotel stableman, and went in to supper.

A crowd rushed round to the stables to see the tricycle. In less than five minutes half a dozen smart Alecks had been shaken out of their boots by the electricity. Of course no one dared touch it after that.

"But how does he stand the shocks?" a curly-haired dude of the bicyclists asked.

"Oh, he knows his business," said another. "He isn't afraid to leave it out all night. Nobody would steal the thing."

"Well, I guess not," said another. "It can knock out any thief in the United States."

Many of the delegates to the convention saw the tricycle, and then naturally desired to see the young inventor of it. When they tried to get at him, they found that he was the sensation of the hour.

Bicyclists who had made a great deal of noise at home naturally expected to be the heroes of fine records at the convention. But they were doomed to bitter disappointment. This young inventor, who was no bicyclist at all, was all the rage. He laid them all in the shade with his beautiful tricycle.

Two young men from Cleveland, O., named Conrad Spreckels and John Harrison, both ambitious sons of rich fathers, and expert bicyclists, were very pronounced in their opinions.

"This is not a tricycle crowd," said Spreckels to a party of bicyclists. "We have nothing to do with tricycles. Our convention is to be held in the interest of wheelmen. Let young Reade and his nondescript machine alone."

"That's what I think," said Harrison. "What's the tricycle good for? It doesn't develop any muscle, nor require any skill to work it. There's no balancing to be



done, nor propulsion. It gives no exercise, either. Bah! It makes me tired to hear some men talk."

"But have you seen it work?" a timid bicyclist asked.

"No. I've seen the thing, though, and know just how it goes. That's enough for me. As for traveling, I use the railroads when I wish to go anywhere."

"Yes, but if the railroad doesn't run where you want to go, this tricycle is just the thing."

"Bah! That's all you know about it. I can go anywhere I wish on my wheel."

"Yes, that's so," chorused a dozen bicyclists at once.

"He isn't a delegate nohow. We've got nothing to do with him," said one.

"He is going to try to get into the convention, at any rate," said another.

"Well, he won't get in," Spreckels declared, with a good deal of emphasis.

"That he won't," remarked Harrison. "We don't want anybody but bicyclists, and won't have 'em."

Such was the subtle influence of jealous envy, that when the convention opened the next day, in one of the largest halls in the city, not one of the seven hundred wheelmen had the courage to propose that he be admitted to a seat.

But the young hero was laughing in his sleeve all the time. He did not ask to be admitted. He attended as a spectator, and when he entered the hall every man woman and child gazed upon him as if he had been the conqueror of nations. They stood up on their seats to get a good look at him.

The bicyclists were green with envy and jealous rage. Their glory had departed.

It had been published in the papers that the wheelmen would parade through the streets in the afternoon. All the ladies were going to turn out to see them.

Frank resolved to ride over the ground about one block ahead of the procession, and take all their thunder from them.

At the appointed hour the procession moved. It was a beautiful sight. Every bicycle was nickel-plated, flashing in the sunlight like burnished silver.

When it had moved a couple of blocks the electric tricycle started at the rear end and rushed past every wheelman till it reached the head of the column.

At the first glimpse of it the multitude became perfectly uproarious in applause.

Hat and handkerchiefs were swung in the air, and the welkin rang with cheers. And when the young inventor waved the American flag and bowed to the people he carried their hearts by storm.

There was a rush to keep up with him, as everybody wished to watch the graceful movements of the silent machinery of the tricycle. No one seemed to take any notice of the bicyclists, and that fact made some of them turn green with envy.

But the young inventor seemed to take it all as a matter of course. He led the procession over the published route, keeping just one block ahead of them, carrying an enormous crowd with him, which gathered numbers as he progressed.

At last the leader of the wheelmen forged ahead, and riding up alongside of the tricycle, demanded:

"What do you mean by interfering with our parade, sir? Your conduct is not that of a gentleman."

"Who the blazes are *you*?" demanded Frank, looking the irate wheelman full in the face.

"I am Landy Larrigan, President of the Wheelmen's Convention, and I think——"

"You can't think with such a head as yours," retorted Frank, interrupting him. "There's nothing in it to think with. If you don't clear out, Mr. Landy Larrigan will be landed on his head, for I will run over him with my little tricycle."

Landy Larrigan dared not provoke a difficulty with him on the street, as he well knew the mob would be against him; so he hissed:

"I'll see you after the parade, and have satisfaction."

"Yes, do," said Frank, moving on in the even tenor of his way.

At last the procession ended, and Frank returned to his hotel, to receive the plaudits of all who admired inventive genius, courage and pluck.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CHALLENGE TO A RACE—THE START.

THAT evening the hotel was crowded with excited wheelmen. The citizens were laughing at them, and ridicule is something difficult to bear.

Landy Larrigan was furious.

He wanted to see Frank Reade and pull his nose.

"Yes, sir—pull his nose, sir," he said, very pompously. "He insulted me on the street. I'll pull his nose for him, the young upstart!"

"You had better make your will disposing of your wheel before you do," remarked a gentleman standing by, "for the young genius is a good shot, and not afraid of anything in the garb of a wheelman."

"What have you got to do with it?" Larrigan asked, sneeringly.

"Nothing whatever, except a natural disposition to warn a man of his danger," replied the stranger.

"When I want your assistance I'll call for it, sir," returned Larrigan.

"Then you may not get it," was the quiet reply.

Just then young Reade came down-stairs into the grand rotunda of the hotel. Larrigan made a rush for him.

"Here, you young whelp!" he cried, "you in——"

Whack! went Frank's fist on his nose, and the irate wheelman staggered back into the arms of one of his friends.

"Was it *me* you called a whelp?" Frank asked, very coolly.

Of course a tremendous excitement resulted.

Wheelmen and citizens rushed to the foot of the stairs where the meeting took place.

The wheelmen were savage.

They wanted to mob the young inventor on the spot.

But Frank drew his revolver, and dared one of them to advance upon him.

"You are all a set of cowards!" he exclaimed. "I have as much right to come here with my tricycle as you had to bring your little bicycles. You are mad because you are left. If you had any sense you would accept the situation and make the most of it."



"That's so!" yelled a citizen. "Hurra for the plucky little inventor!"

The vast crowd nearly raised the roof with their cheers. Scores of men rushed up to Frank, and offered to stand by him in a fight.

"Oh, there won't be any fight," he replied, as he saw Larrigan led away by a party of friends.

The excitement subsided for awhile, till Spreckels and Harrison, the two leading wheelmen of Cleveland, ran across Frank in the reading-room.

"I say, Reade," called out Spreckels, in a boisterous tone. "That tricycle of yours is a fraud."

"Is it, indeed?" replied Frank.

"Yes. It can't stand the test with a good bicycle."

"Oh, it can't, eh?"

"No. That kind of machinery will do for a spurt of a day or two, and then it gets out of order, or goes to pieces. A fine race-horse can make pretty good time in a spurt, but a man can start out on a six days match and kill him deadlier than a smoked herring."

"That's true as to the horse," said Frank, very quietly, "but not true as regards the tricycle."

"Well, as to that, there is a difference of opinion."

"I don't know where the difference is," said Frank, "as the people of Chicago seem to be unanimous in their opinion."

"Oh, the rabble!" and the young aristocratic wheelman sneered. "We don't want *their* opinion."

"Of course not—unless it is in your favor. Now, see here, sir. I've heard a good deal of talk from you wheelmen since yesterday. I am a wheelman myself—as much so as any of you; have a splendid bicycle at home. I got up this thing as a diversion. A man with a tricycle is as much a wheelman as the bicyclist. I am going to make you shut up or put up on a race to New Orleans. I will put up \$1,000, to be given to a charity institution, against a like amount, if I can't beat you two days in reaching the Crescent City."

"Oh—oh—oh!" laughed the wheelman. "Can you put up the money, young man?"

"Oh, yes. The proprietors of this house will cash my check on my father."

"Well, I'll take that bet. How much forfeit can you put up now?"

"As much as you can. Come to the desk and put up."

"I'll put up \$100 forfeit, and put in \$900 more to-morrow," said the Cleveland wheelman.

"All right; come to the desk," and Frank led the way to the cashier's desk, followed by an eager, excited crowd.

"I say, Reade!" called out Harrison, "won't you cover another thousand of mine?"

"Yes; come on."

At the desk Frank wrote out a check on his father for \$2,000, and handed it to the cashier, saying:

"Post \$200 for me now, and forward that check to-morrow."

The cashier knew Frank's father well, and promptly indorsed the check, putting up the \$200 against a like amount by Spreckels and Harrison.

It was soon over, and the news flew all over the city in a few hours. The excitement increased to a white heat.

Even the good people in the churches became interested, as the stakes, no matter which won, were to be given to a charity institution designated by the winner.

Of course, all the betting men became interested, as it would be the biggest race ever known.

Spreckels and Harrison had splendid records with the bicycle.

But the records were made in rinks. How they could do on ordinary country roads a distance of over 1,200 miles, was another question. Frank had traveled 300 miles in two days, and said he could have done better if the emergency had called for it, which it did not.

The next day after the challenge, the three young men put up the money and signed the articles of agreement.

They were to follow the main public roads running south toward the Crescent City, and pass through the towns and villages in a public manner, so that the people could see them.

Frank was to forfeit the \$2,000 to a charity institution to be designated by the winners, if he failed to reach New Orleans forty-eight hours in advance of Spreckels and Harrison. The one who rode on any vehicle other than bicycle or tricycle during the trip was to be declared out and forfeit his stake. The crossing of a river on a ferry-boat was to be allowed.

After the agreement had been signed, the sporting men everywhere began to put up their money. The odds were largely in favor of the tricycle in Chicago and Northwestern towns. In Cleveland, the home of the two bicyclists, the betting was even in favor of the two champions.

The start was to be made in one week from the date of the agreement. The map of the route was agreed upon and published, naming every town and village through which they were to pass.

Frank had written to his father, giving him all the points. The elder Reade regretted that Frank had given the challenge, but as he had done so he wanted him to win. So much was he interested that he made a run down to the city to see and counsel with his plucky boy.

The Bicyclists' Convention adjourned the next day after the challenge was made, so that but few remained in the city to see them off.

"My son," said Frank Reade, Sr., to his young namesake, "you have gone into this thing without any idea of the danger of it."

"Danger! Why, father, where is the danger?"

"Ah! you may well ask that question, my boy. Don't you know that betting men in almost every city in the United States are risking all their money on one side or the other of this race?"

"Yes, I had heard as much. But what of that? I don't see any danger in that."

"Of course you don't. You haven't had experience enough in the world yet to look at things from every stand-point. Suppose the gamblers who have staked their money that you will lose should see that you were about to win? What would they do? Why, they would do everything in their power to keep you from winning. They would hire men to detain you, club you, maybe kill you, or break the tricycle—anything to keep you from winning. There's where your danger lies."



Young Frank was astonished.

"I must confess that I never thought of that, father," he said, after a minute or two of silence. "But won't the other fellows have to run the same risks?"

"Hardly."

"Why not? More men have bet on my success than theirs."

"Because there will be a pair of them and only one of you. They will be a mutual protection concern; besides, in various towns bicyclists will mount their wheels, and accompany them many miles on their way. There are no tricycles to keep you company. You will have to go it alone."

"Yes, I see how it is now. But I won't back an inch, father."

"I don't want you to, my son," said the elder Reade. "I want you to go in and win. Stand by your own invention always, and back it up. But you must go well armed, and be always suspicious. Keep your eyes and ears open. I shall send Barney and Pomp all the way down ahead of you by rail, with instructions to see you pass through a town all right, and then take a train for the next town."

"Ah! that's a good idea, father. I am glad you thought of that."

"I thought it a good thing to do, but the matter must be kept a profound secret. They will keep up a bright lookout for you, and give you a helping hand, if needed."

"That was a lucky thought of yours, father. When will they start?"

"About the same time that you do. There will be no danger till you get way down about Memphis. By that time it will begin to appear which will win. Then the danger will begin. Barney and Pomp will meet you at St. Louis, and next at Memphis. After that they had better meet you at nearly every little town you pass through."

Father and son then held a private consultation about finances. The elder Reade told him to be cautious about displaying any money at the hotels on the route.

"You can have no idea how much excitement is going to grow out of this thing, my boy."

"I shall not forget a word of what you have said to me, father."

"That's right. Now let's go to bed, for I am going back home to-morrow on an early train."

They retired at a late hour, but were up in time for Reade, Sr., to catch his train.

When the day for the start came, there was much more interest manifested than when the Bicyclists' Convention met. Thousands of men, women and children lined the streets to see them off.

Frank had taken time to make a little addition to his tricycle. He arranged a large umbrella to be used in case of a violent rain-storm, or to shield him from the rays of the hot Southern sun.

It was evident to the spectators that the bicyclists would have to take every storm that came along, as they could not hold umbrellas and guide their wheels at the same time. They might do so in a rink, but not in hard traveling.

Frank had a well-packed valise strapped behind his seat,

and in the chest underneath was a complete set of tools, rubbers, etc., in case he should have need for any of them.

At high noon they were to start at a signal given by the mayor of the city.

"Gentlemen," said the mayor, just five minutes before starting time, "you are about to start on a long journey. You have my best wishes for a pleasant one. Millions of our people will watch your progress, for they are fond of such sports. You are working for sweet charity. Let that fact promote good fellowship and kindly feeling among you. Time is up, gentlemen. Good-bye, and good luck to you."

The mayor gave the signal, and they were off with a bound for the greatest bicycle race the world had ever seen.

A score of wheelmen escorted them some ten miles on their way. After that they were left to pursue their way alone at their leisure.

"Well, we are in for a long journey," remarked Frank as he kept even pace with them for several miles.

"Yes," said Harrison, "and we are going in to win."

"I guess not."

"I guess yes. You made a mistake when you made that challenge. We expect you to forge ahead of us—maybe as much as one day. But you can't gain two days on us. Oh, no. We are moving along all the time in the same direction. Just chalk it down that we are going to win, and make up your mind to bear it meekly," and the two bicyclists laughed heartily as they moved swiftly along over the level country road.

"I am glad you fellows feel good," said Frank. "You have the advantage of me in having company all the way. I shall have a very lonesome trip of it."

"Well, it is your challenge."

"Yes, and I am going to win the race. I am off," and with that he turned on a strong current of electricity that sent the tricycle flying along the road at railroad speed.

In a few minutes he was a couple of miles ahead, and still gaining—going at the rate of over twenty miles an hour.

Looking back, he waved his hat at them, and then settled down to steady work.

"I'm bound to win," he said to himself, "if I don't meet with any accident. To prevent that, I shall be extremely careful. I don't believe they can average over ten miles an hour. I know I can't average twenty, but I am going to get as near to it as possible. Ah! if I have such a road and such weather as this I shall have no difficulty about it whatever. Fortunately, there are no mountains in the Mississippi Valley. There may be some overflowed lands in the way, but whatever stops me will stop them."

In an hour or so he struck the first village after leaving Chicago. The people were all out on the streets looking for him.

They received him with round after round of cheers. He bowed to them, and stopped just long enough to get a drink of water from a lovely "Rebecca at the well."

Then he pushed on, and in a few more minutes was out of sight of the villagers, who turned to watch and wait for the coming bicyclists.



They came along in due time, looking red in the face from heat and exercise, but hearty, strong and hopeful as ever.

They, too, stopped for water. They needed it more than Frank did. But they stopped for only a couple of minutes and then pushed on. They were determined to lose no more time than was absolutely necessary.

Village after village was passed, and great crowds greeted the plucky young inventor at every place. They had read all about the challenge in the papers and the causes that led to it. Their sympathies were with him because of his youth and indomitable pluck.

When night came Frank had made about one hundred and thirty miles. As it was a bright, starlight evening, he resolved to push on to the next village, about twenty miles further south. The road was good. He could not lose his way, so he lit his head-light lantern, which threw a brilliant electric light nearly one hundred yards in advance, showing the road as clearly as at noonday.

"Boys," said an old railroad engineer, when he saw the little electric headlight, "you may bet on that lad's winning. He's too smart to get left. He can travel all night if he wants to."

He did not make as good time in the evening, for fear of accidents. But he made the twenty miles in about one and one-half hours.

The people at that village did not expect him to arrive till the next morning, hence, his sudden appearance at the little tavern created great excitement. The news of his arrival flew like wildfire, and in a half-hour's time the tavern was crowded with people anxious to see the young hero and his wonderful invention.

As he was a youth of but nineteen, all the young girls were anxious to see him and make his acquaintance. He was good-looking, with bright, sparkling black eyes, and roguish expression when he laughed. The girls all declared him "too cute for anything."

As he entered the tavern, he left the tricycle standing outdoors, in front of the house.

The landlord received him with great cordiality when he introduced himself.

"Why, we didn't expect to see you before some time to-morrow forenoon!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, I mean business," said Frank, laughing. "No snail-paces for me. The other fellows will be along to-morrow."

"I want to see that machine. Where is it?"

"There it is out there. But don't touch it."

"Of course not," and the landlord took a lantern and went out to inspect it. The few loungers present went out to help him do it. Others came flocking around, and as the crowd increased, Frank went inside and asked for supper.

The landlady and her two pretty daughters soon had a hot supper on the table before him. One by one the village maidens came in to get a look at him, till pretty soon the room was half filled with them.

Frank laughed.

He began to realize that he was quite a lion among them.

"Why, one ought to feel flattered in such sweet company," he said, as he looked around at the rosy-cheeked

maidens, "and I assure you I do. I am sorry you cannot see the tricycle in the day-time, as I am going to start at daylight to-morrow morning, when every pair of pretty eyes will be closed in sleep."

"My eyes will be wide open to see you go by," said a pretty little curly-headed miss of sixteen on his right.

He turned and looked at her, and exclaimed:

"Ah! I shall feel proud to know that. Will you shake hands with me?"

"Yes, sir;" and a pretty little brown, dimpled hand was laid in his.

Of course that led to a general hand-shaking all around.

But he had not shaken hands with half the young ladies in the room, when he heard a yell outside among the men, followed by a general laugh by the crowd.

"Oh, mercy!" exclaimed one of the ladies, "what can the matter be?"

"I guess some one has received a shock from the tricycle," said Frank, in a smiling humor. "You see, if I didn't turn on the current of electricity to keep them off they would ruin it. Everybody wants to climb up on it, or handle it in some way. But when they get a shock that nearly knocks them silly they let it alone."

"Dear me! how I would like to see it!" said one of the ladies.

"So you may. Come out in front of the house."

And he led the way out to where nearly one hundred men and boys were gathered around the tricycle.

Just as they assembled on the piazza a drunken man staggered up and caught hold of the wheel with both hands. He received a shock that rattled every bone in his body, and caused him to let out a yell that almost created a panic among the ladies.

He staggered backward and fell into the arms of one of the by-standers, all of whom roared with laughter. When he recovered his wits he began to swear like a pirate. He was the maddest man ever seen in that village.

While he was pouring a stream of sulphurous language on the heads of the crowd, a dog came up and passed between the spokes of one of the wheels. He, too, caught the current, or, rather, the current caught him. He gave a yelp, and sprang into the crowd, as if shot out of a cannon. With a series of ki-yi's, he rushed for home like a streak of lightning.

Then the swearing turned into laughing. The drunken man was sobered completely by the shock. He hadn't been as sober for months. He laughed at the dog till he cried.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he chuckled. "Me and the dog! Both caught it! Good thing ter knock 'em out with."

As he had to make an early start in the morning, our young hero retired to bed at an early hour, after having placed the tricycle inside the house.

He was up before daylight the next morning, and was surprised at seeing so many up to see him off.

After eating a hearty breakfast, and shaking hands with all present, he mounted his seat and was off like a flash.

He had consulted a country map as to the various roads that diverged from the main route, to make sure that he did not take the wrong one. Thus armed, he lost no time on the way. Such was the good condition of the roads in



that section, that ere the sun rose that morning he had made about twenty miles.

He passed through two villages without stopping, the people who saw him cheering him as he went by. He waved a flag over his head in response to their cheers, and went on.

By noon he had made over one hundred miles, and stopped at a small town to take a dinner which had been prepared in anticipation of his coming some time that day.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### FRANK MEETS WITH MANY ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD.

As at other places, the people had a great curiosity to see him and his wonderful tricycle. Nearly every man and boy had a desire to take hold of it. None of them got a good grip on it, though. The electric current knocked some of them silly, and then the crowd would yell with delight.

"Say, Reade," cried a lawyer, who had just received a shock that made his hair stand up straight, "how do you manage to keep from getting a whack now and then?"

"By being on my guard all the time," was the reply. "But I don't always escape. I got a complete knock-down a day or two before I started."

"I am glad to hear it," said the lawyer. "I like to see the biter bit now and then."

"Oh, you want satisfaction, do you?" Frank asked.

"No, I've got it already," and then both laughed and shook hands.

"You see," said Frank, "I have to charge it with a current of electricity whenever I dismount in order to make sure that no one steals it, or that meddling fools don't injure it."

After eating a hearty dinner, the young hero mounted the tricycle again and moved on southward. A half-dozen young men had mounted fleet horses for the purpose of giving him a hard race over three miles of a wide level road.

"Oh, there's no use running against horse-flesh," said Frank. "A horse can't keep up his best speed very long, you know. My horse can run all day without once getting winded."

"We'll give you a trial for three miles, anyhow," said one of them.

"All right. But don't get in my way. If one of your horses should run against the tricycle while it was going at full speed, he would be instantly killed."

"The deuce!"

"Yes, for the electricity is then simply unchained lightning."

"Well, I'm glad you told us that," said one, "for we might have run against you. But you can bet I'll give you as much of the road as you want."

"So will I," put in another. "No lightning for me, if you please."

In a little while they were ready to start.

"I'll go ahead," said Frank. "Your horses raise too much dust."

"Go ahead, then. We'll soon show you our heels."

"Oh, you will, eh! Well, come on," and the tricycle started off.

The half-dozen horsemen dashed after him with a tremendous clatter.

The road was a fair one, and our young hero had a fair swing. He let out plenty of electricity, and the tricycle went spinning over the ground at a fearful rate of speed.

Everybody cheered, but in just two minutes the tricycle was out of town going like lightning.

The horses did their best, and they were all good horses, too. But as Frank had said, they had not the staying powers of electricity. They were soon left behind. At the end of three miles they were fully a quarter of a mile behind the tricycle.

Frank did not stop to say anything to them. He had no time to lose, so he kept at the same rate of speed.

"I may as well keep this up as long as the road is so good," he said to himself. "After awhile, I may strike some bad roads where I shall have to go slow. Hello! Here comes an old-fashioned family concern."

He saw ahead of him, an old spring wagon with a farmer, his wife, and half-dozen children in it. It was drawn by a horse that had evidently spent his life in very hard work, with but scant rations in the feed-trough.

But old and poor as he was, the old horse had a good deal of life in him. He pricked up his ears as he saw the tricycle coming, and began to dance about the road as if he had very decided objections to meeting it.

"Whoa, gol darn yer!" cried the old farmer, sawing away with the reins as if he would split his mouth to his ears. "What's the matter with yer, eh?"

"Oh, papa, look!" cried one of the children in the wagon, as the tricycle passed them like a flash.

The old man didn't have a chance to look. The old horse gave a snort of terror and turned square off to the right, making such a short turn that the entire family was upset into the middle of the road.

Frank heard screams of women and children, mingled with some pretty hard words from the old man, and then he was too far away to hear more.

"Sorry it happened," he said. "Hope none of them were hurt. I'll bet that old horse hasn't cut up like that before in ten years. Hello! There goes a dog! I'll give him a scare."

He put for the dog with a yell. The dog looked back and saw something coming, and at once took to his heels.

Frank yelled again.

The dog lowered his tail and got down to business. He actually cut a hole in the air, so fast did he run.

But the tricycle gained on him in spite of his speed.

Then he shied off and got into the grass of the prairie, hoping his pursuer would keep on in the road.

But Frank knew all about the prairie, and went after the dog, yelling at the top of his voice.

By this time the dog began to think some dog-gone Nemesis was after him, and uttering a terror-stricken yelp he got down closer to work.

"Ki-yi-yi!"

"Whoop—tiger-r-r-r!" screeched Frank, running the tricycle up close to the dog's tail.

Then he watched a chance to bring the current forward when in contact with the canine's caudal appendage. The electric current was strong, and the moment the connection



was made the dog sprung several feet in the air with a horrible screech of pain and terror.

A pond of water, covering several acres of ground, was a few hundred rods away, and the dog, with splendid reasoning instinct, made for it. On reaching it he plunged in, and boldly struck out for the other side.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Frank, as he stopped on the edge of the pond. "That was a cute dodge for a dog. He knew I could not take water like that. He won't forget the close call he had, though. Hanged if I wouldn't give ten dollars to hear him tell the other dogs about it. If he tells the truth about it he will do better than a good many men would do. Hanged if he isn't a good swimmer."

He watched the dog till he reached the other side of the pond, and saw him shake the water from his dripping sides as he looked back to see what had become of his strange pursuer.

"The rascal isn't such a dog-gone fool after all," said Frank, as he turned round and made his way back toward the road.

Once he looked back and saw the dog lying down and panting, as if he really enjoyed the rest.

Out in the road again, the young hero put on a full current of electricity, and let her go at her best.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "if anything should get out of order at this rate of speed it would be worse than a railroad smash-up. It must be at least a twenty-five mile rate. I couldn't do this on a rough road."

The road was splendid for many miles, running through a level prairie country. Houses were passed every few minutes, and men, women and children stared in open-eyed wonder as the strange vehicle whizzed by.

At last he overtook a drove of hogs, which a half-dozen men were driving down to St. Louis to be slaughtered for market.

There were about 1,000 hogs in the drove, and they blocked up the way very effectually, on account of fences being on both sides of the road for a number of miles in that section.

"By George!" muttered Frank, as he took in the situation, "this looks bad for me. These hogs have got possession of the road, and that's nine points of the law on me. I'll ask one of the drovers about it, and see if I can't be allowed to drive through them."

He called out to one of the men.

They all turned and looked back at him and his wonderful vehicle.

"Why, what in tarnation blazes is that, stranger?" one of them asked.

"Oh, it's a new kind of buggy I made for traveling," was the reply.

"Wal, now, where's your horse?"

"I don't use a horse—wouldn't have one with this thing. Can I get through your hogs, do you think?"

"Wal, now, I don't know what you can do with that thing. What is it, anyhow, and how does it go?"

"It goes right along. Just watch her now," and he turned short around and ran back about a half-mile at full speed. Then he turned and came back like a whirlwind.

The drovers were dumfounded.

"Look hyer, mister!" exclaimed one of the men, "how many hogs will yer take for her?"

"Oh, I wouldn't sell her for all the hogs in that drove," said Frank.

Then they stared again, for there were about \$18,000 worth of pork in the drove.

They looked at the young inventor, and asked:

"Whar did yer get her?"

"Made it myself."

"The deuce!"

"Yes."

"How does she run?"

"By electricity."

"Elec—what?"

"Electricity—lightning, you know."

"But I don't know," and the big drover scratched his head and appeared considerably nonplused.

He knew nothing about electricity. He had spent all his life raising hogs, and cared for nothing else.

"Wal, now," he said, coming up to the tricycle, "that beats me all hollow, an'—ough!"

He caught hold of the big wheel, and Frank turned on a pretty good current of the subtle fluid, which gave him such a shaking up as he had never received before in all his life. He sprung several feet away and pulled himself together, eying our hero suspiciously the while.

"Wha—what was it?" he gasped.

"That was the electricity. You got a shock, did you not?"

"Yas—I'd say I did. Look hyer, youngster, do you see this hyer weepin?" and a big six-shooter came from a pocket back on his hip.

"Yes," said Frank, "I've got one just like it. I'll bet I'm a better shot than you are."

The drover looked at him as if surprised to see such cool courage in one so young.

"I ain't a-bettin', stranger, but I'm a-shootin', ef yer play me any more of yer tricks."

"Oh! I haven't played you any tricks. You put your hands on my horse and he kicked you. I am not to blame for that, am I?"

All the drovers looked hard at the youth and his strange machine.

"I say," said a rough-looking drover, "let her kick me," and he started to lay hold of the tricycle.

"You won't get mad, eh?"

"No. Let her kick," and he took hold with both hands.

Frank gave him a dose that knocked him double in the middle of the road, to the amazement of the others.

The fellow was almost dazed by the shock. He pulled himself together and felt all over his arms and legs to see if they still clung to him.

"Ugh!" he groaned. "I'm broke all to pieces."

As the drovers had stopped, the hogs had lain down to rest. The bulk of them had lain down as near the fences as they could get. That left the road partially open.

"I can get through there, I think," he said, and then turning to the drovers, said:

"Two fellows will come along here late this evening, or early to-morrow morning, riding on one wheel like this one," pointing to one of his big driving wheels.



"Riding one wheel!"

"Yes, just one wheel each. Just look out and have some fun with 'em. They think they have forgotten more than anybody else ever knew."

"Oh, they do, eh?"

"Yes, and very saucy, too."

"Wal, now, if they sling any of ther sass round hyer they'll git an all-fired wallop in', stranger."

"Of course they will. But don't give 'em any hurts. They are a harmless set of fellows who are going down South on one wheel apiece."

"Ther stingy cusses," ejaculated one of the drovers.

"Well, good-bye. I'll see you in St. Louis. I'm going to stop there."

The next moment he was making his way through the drove of hogs, taking good care not to get up a panic among them by giving them shocks. Every hog touched by the wheels promptly moved out of the way to let him pass.

In a little while he succeeded in getting through the drove.

"They have delayed me at least a half-hour," said he, taking out his watch and noting the time. "I'll make good time as long as this good road holds out," and he put forward with all the speed he could get up.

Mile after a mile was reeled off. Many beautiful farm-houses were passed, whose occupants seemed amazed at the speed of the strange vehicle.

"Spreckels and Harrison will have a good time," he said to himself, "for a man riding on top of a single wheel looks even more curious than this thing does. They'll have no end of fun. But I'll have mine in New Orleans. The man laughs best who laughs last."

At nearly every village on the route the news of his arrival and departure was telegraphed all over the country. The people at the other places thus knew when to expect him.

At one little hamlet a party of young roughs, half intoxicated, resolved to have some fun with him. They got a rope, and stretched it across the road about a mile outside the village. It was tied to trees on both sides.

Then they spent the time, while waiting for the tricycle, singing, dancing, and paying devotions to a big black bottle which one of them carried.

About an hour after they had stretched the rope across the road, the tricycle came bounding along. The young roughs began whooping and yelling like so many lunatics.

Frank saw the rope just in time to avoid running full tilt against it.

He stopped and looked around.

There was no way to get by, and so he prepared to dismount and cut the rope.

The moment he leaped to the ground the five half-drunk roughs made a dash for the tricycle. They all seized hold of it at once, each trying to reach the seat.

But just before he leaped from the seat Frank turned on a strong current of electricity. It was strong enough to down a horse. It did not play loose, but went straight from the shoulder, and the five young roughs were knocked into a heap in the twinkling of an eye.

Lord! how they groaned in their agony! Then, as they regained their speech, they yelled.

As if he had not noticed them, Frank coolly cut the rope, and then, turning off the current, climbed up to his seat, and was away, without having uttered a single word to one of them.

"I wonder if any one put them up to that job?" he asked, as he rode away. "I guess they will have something to think about the rest of the week."

The people in the village knew what the roughs were up to. They dared not interfere, because they dreaded the anger of the gang. They were therefore greatly surprised when they saw the tricycle coming in on time.

The landlord of the village tavern asked:

"Did you see any men out there a mile or so?"

"Yes, five men tied a rope across the road," he replied.

"How did you get by them?"

"Oh, I got down, cut the rope, and came along without any trouble."

The people who heard him were astonished, and many whispered comments were made.

Frank took a drink of fresh water, and then moved on.

An hour later the five men were telling—or trying to—what had happened to them, and the villagers scratched their heads in sheer desperation because they could not understand just how it was. The truth is, the five roughs themselves didn't exactly know just what had happened to them.

## CHAPTER V.

FRANK REACHES ST. LOUIS AND CREATES A SENSATION—  
GAMBLERS AT WORK TO ENCOMPASS HIS DEFEAT.

SUCH were the uniform good roads down through Illinois that young Reade soon reached the little village from which he could see the smoky atmosphere that hung over the great city of St. Louis on the right bank of the "Father of Waters."

"Ah!" he thought, as he looked in the direction of the great river. "I shall soon be there. Barney and Pomp are there waiting for me. I've made splendid time. If I don't beat those fellows I'll throw the tricycle into the Mississippi."

He suspected that quite a demonstration would greet him at St. Louis, and so he stopped at the village hotel long enough to put on a clean shirt and change his clothes.

Thus prepared, he set out on a brisk run for the city. He couldn't make more than ten miles an hour on account of the great number of vehicles on the road at the time. But he soon came to the great bridge that spans the river, and just as he started to go across he heard two familiar voices among a number of others.

"Bedad, it's the gossoon!" cried one.

"Dat's er fac', shuah!" said another, and the next moment Barney and Pomp each had him by the hand.

"Hello, Barney! Pomp, old man, how are you?" and he shook their hands cordially, knowing that he hadn't two more faithful friends in the world.

"Hab a good time, Marse Frank?" Pomp asked.

"The best in the world, Pomp. No end of fun, and I've seen the finest part of the State."



"Sure, an' will yez be afther batin' 'em, Misther Frank?" Barney asked, anxious to be sure that the son of his generous benefactor would win the race.

"Yes, Barney, I'll beat 'em off their bicycles. Why, I'm more than a day ahead now, and not more than one-third the way down."

"Whoop!" yelled the wild rollicking son of Erin, throwing up his hat and cutting a pigeon's-wing.

"Where are you stopping here?" Frank asked of Pomp.

"We aint stoppin' nowhar," was the reply; "we jist got heah dis mornin', an' come fo' ter look for yer."

"Well, you have done well. Have you heard the people talking much about the race?"

"Yes, sah. Dey's bet heaps o' money on it."

"Well, those that bet on me will be happy in a few days. I'll not stop but an hour or two in the city, for it won't do to waste any time on the way. You and Barney had better take the train at once, and wait for me at some point about one hundred miles below here. Keep your eyes and ears open. Have you got money enough to see you through?"

"Yes, sah."

"All right, then. If I miss you, meet me at Memphis," and he shook hands with them and drove across the bridge.

Over in the city the news of his arrival created great excitement in sporting circles. Hundreds rushed forward to greet and congratulate him.

The betting men asked him any number of questions, and many changed their bets.

"Why, he's a day ahead now," said one, "and yet only about one-third the distance gone. I'll bet two to one that he wins."

Such was the depression among the bicyclists that none of them took the odds. The tricyclists then became bolder, and in a little while offered four to one.

Then the cold-blooded villains began their work. They clubbed together to put up \$25,000 against \$100,000, and the tricyclists agreed to cover the amount.

"I shall win," said the daring young inventor. "Give 'em all the odds they want. I only wish I had \$100,000 to put up on it."

"But you may meet with bad weather, bad roads, and other obstacles," suggested one of the more timid ones.

"Of course. I expect all that. But how will the other fellows escape the some difficulties?"

"Ah! I never thought of that," and the timid man regained his oozing courage.

At the end of two hours Frank resumed his journey. But he was not allowed to get away without some kind of a demonstration on the part of his friends who had staked their money on his success. They got up a splendid brass band and escorted him back over the bridge, a vast crowd following and wildly cheering the young hero.

About a mile over the other side he parted from the crowd, and set out with such a spurt of speed as to cause his backers to offer to double their stakes on the spot.

But the moment he was gone, the men who had taken the heavy odds offered set about encompassing his defeat. Four of them met in a back room to discuss the matter.

"If he wins, we are ruined," said one. "If he fails, our fortunes are made."

"That's so," assented the other four.

"Therefore, he must not win," remarked the first speaker.

"No," returned the others.

"Let's chip in and send a man down below to see that he is delayed, or otherwise blocked."

"Agreed!" and they each chipped five hundred dollars to pay the expenses of a man to do the work of stopping the young hero.

"Who will do the work?" one asked.

"I can find the right man," said the first speaker, pocketing the money that had been put up by all four of them.

"Two or three ought to do the job," suggested one of the party.

"Yes, three can do it, I guess."

The man with the money in his pocket went out in search of a certain desperate character by the name of Bob Decker.

Decker was once a noted sportsman about St. Louis. He kept several fast horses and lived at the best hotels in the city. But in an evil hour he got involved in a black-mailing case, which ended in his serving a term in prison. When he came out his prestige was gone. His fast horses had changed hands, and not even a friend among the high-toned rascals was left to do him reverence. He tried to recuperate at the gaming-table. But luck seemed to have turned against him. Down, down he went, till at last he found a place in the lowest rum-holes in the city. He became a bouncer in one, a steerer in another, and was ever ready to do any dirty job for pay.

Such was the character of the man the gambler selected to bring about the defeat of young Reade in his great race.

The gambler soon found his man, and told him what he wanted him to do.

"I'm your oyster," said Bob.

"Can you get two more good men to go with you?"

"Yes—a dozen, if necessary."

"Tom Wilder and Jim Nolan would go, wouldn't they?"

"Yes; and good men they are, too."

"Well, here's one hundred each for them if they go, and five hundred for you to pay expenses. If you succeed, it's a thousand dollars in your hands."

"Then I'll succeed if I have to kill him," said the villain, as he took the money and thrust it in his pocket.

"You had better get away, then, as quickly as possible, for he makes pretty good time. You had better get down into Tennessee or Mississippi to get in your work."

"Just leave that to me," said Bob, with a knowing wink. "I'll be off in a couple of hours if I can find Tom and Jim in time."

Decker then hastened in search of his two pals, and succeeded in finding them in their usual haunts.

In a few minutes he explained to them what was wanted, and showed them the money for expenses.

"And here's \$100 apiece for you," he added, handing them the money.

That was a persuader they were not able to resist. They did not try to resist. They took the money, bought new suits of clothes, and then set out with Decker for Paducah, in Kentucky.



It so happened that Barney and Pomp went along on the same train. Barney was in a jovial humor, and was soon engaged in conversation with one of the St. Louis toughs.

They soon began to talk of the great race. Barney said he had bet all his money on the two bicyclists.

"So have I," said the tough, "and they are going to win. Don't you forget that I told you so."

"If I thought so, bedad, I'd be afther borrowin' me mither's ould stocking."

"It's all fixed," said the tough. "He can't win. They won't let him."

"Bedad, an' is that the throoth?"

"Every word of it," and the tough shook hands with the Irishman, with a very wise air.

Barney then said he would double his bets when he got back home, and asked the tough to go into the smoking-car to have a drink with him. Of course the rascal accepted the invitation, and they had several drinks together.

But Barney could not get anything more definite out of him. He rejoined Pomp and told him what he had heard.

"Better watch dat man, Barney," said Pomp, shaking his head.

"Bedad, an' we will do that same," said the Irishman.

Barney then suggested that they follow them to see what they were up to.

Pomp agreed, and thus it happened that all five got off at Paducah.

Decker and his two companions went to a first-class hotel.

Barney went also to the same place, and Pomp went round to the kitchen and engaged board and quarters with the servants as long as he remained. By giving the big fat greasy cook a dollar he had the freedom of the kitchen.

Judging from the tone of the conversation on the piazza of the hotel, it was not believed that the young inventor would be in town that night.

"He can't reach here unless he travels in the dark," said a man who was well posted on the roads between St. Louis and Paducah.

"Then he'll be along early in the morning," remarked another.

"Yes—he may not have to travel more than twenty miles to reach here, hence, we may expect him by sunrise."

"Then he won't stop?"

"Yes, for a few minutes—maybe a half-hour."

"Gentlemen," said another, who just came up, "young Reade is now at the River House, where he stopped about ten minutes ago. He will stay all night there."

"The deuce!" gasped the landlord, who fully expected the young hero would make his house his stopping-place.

Every man in the party started off at once for the River House to see the young inventor. Barney and Pomp went along also.

Sure enough, Frank was there.

Barney saw him, but did not let any one see that he was known to the young hero. Both he and Pomp kept up a good watch on the three men.

Decker and his two companions shook hands with Frank

and wished him all manner of success. Frank thanked them for their kind wishes, and then had the tricycle locked up in the carriage-house for the night.

Some time after midnight the carriage-house was broken into, and two men crept inside. One of them laid his hand on the tricycle, and was knocked senseless to the floor.

In the dark, the other man heard a groan and a fall, and being suspicious that he had been killed, took to his heels and made off as fast as he could go. They were the two roughs Decker had brought down from St. Louis with him.

The man who escaped ran back and told Bob Decker that Jim had been killed.

"The deuce!" ejaculated Bob. "How do you know he was?"

"He was creeping along ahead of me in the dark," said Tom Wilder, "when I heard a blow struck, and Jim went down with a groan. Then all was so still that I thought it best to skip, and I did."

"Well, that knocks us out for the night," said Bob Decker. "I hope Jim is not done for altogether. We must go to sleep and pretend not to even have any acquaintance with him, if his body is found there in the morning."

Jim had received such a terrible shock that he remained insensible for nearly an hour. Then he came to, and for got where he was. He did not stop to ask where he was. He was in such pain that he groaned—groaned piteously—and wondered what in the world had happened to him.

"Oh, Lord!" he moaned. "What was it hit me? I was struck all over at once. Tom! Tom! where are you?"

But Tom was back in bed at the hotel, trying to reason out what fate had befallen his companion.

Then Jim recollected where he was, and kept silent. He crawled toward the door, for he could see the starlight where he and Tom had left the door open.

Outside the door he tried to get upon his feet. He suffered intolerable pain in every joint, and groans of agony burst from his lips in spite of him.

But he gradually pulled himself together, and made his way back to the hotel where he was stopping. The night-clerk sent a servant to show him up to his room. He suppressed his groans by a desperate effort, and sent the servant down-stairs to bring him up a drink of brandy.

The brandy was brought, and he gulped it down with the eagerness of one half famished. It made him feel easier, and gradually his groans ceased.

By degrees he calmed down, and an hour or so after reaching his room he dropped off into a fitful slumber.

Hundreds were up at daylight to see the daring inventor off.

Bob and Tom were among the early risers. They wanted to hear what was said and done if Jim's body was found in the carriage-house.

"Somebody has been in here," said Frank, to the landlord, as soon as he reached the carriage-house door.

"How do you know that?" the landlord asked.

"By this," and he pointed to a broken seal on the door. "I put a seal on this door last night, not so much to keep



people out as to find out if anybody were really trying to get at my tricycle."

The landlord looked at the broken seal, and saw that what Frank said was true.

"I can't imagine who it was," he said.

"Of course not. But some rascals are looking for a place to be killed, and they will be accommodated sooner than they think," and he reached over and turned off the current so as to avoid accidents among the crowd that had assembled to see him off.

"By jingo!" exclaimed Tom Wilder, in a half whisper, to Bob Decker, "Jim isn't in there! He must have got away somehow."

"That's so. I hope he is not in any trouble on account of it."

Just then they caught the story that the carriage-house had been broken into during the night. They listened, but made no remarks. They soon learned that the tricycle had not been tampered with, so far as could be ascertained.

In a little while Frank was off. Barney and Pomp were in the crowd, keeping their eyes on Tom and Bob, the two St. Louis men.

As Bob and Tom wended their way back to the hotel, the latter said:

"I don't understand it. I am greatly puzzled. Jim must have been made way with somehow."

"Just what I am thinking," said the other. "I say, Tom!"

"Well, say on."

"Let's go to his room, and see if he is in."

"All right."

They went up to his room and listened at the door.

"I hear some one snoring in there," said Tom, in a half-whisper.

"Knock on the door."

Tom did so, giving a certain number of raps, which would signal who he was if Jim was within.

Like all criminals, Jim was a light sleeper. He heard the raps, and rolled out of bed to answer them.

"Is it you, Tom?" he asked.

"Yes, and Bob," was the reply.

Jim opened the door and lit the gas.

"What's the matter, Jim?" Bob asked, as soon as Tom closed the door behind him.

"Why, I've been murdered," was the reply, with a groan.

Bob and Tom looked at him in great curiosity.

"Well, the assassin made a bad job of it, if you are a specimen of his work in that line. Where are you hurt?"

"I don't know. I was hit all over at once, and when I came to I was all alone in that carriage-house. I won't travel with you any further, Tom," and he gave Tom a look that was intended to betray the depth of his contempt for his partner in guilt.

## CHAPTER VI.

FRANK IS HALTED BY MEN IN MASKS, AND KNOCKS THEM OUT.

"WHAT'S the matter now?" Tom asked. "What have I done?"

"You left me in the lurch on the approach of danger! Bah! Go away. You make me tired."

"But I thought you were done for, Jim," protested Tom. "You didn't expect me to stay by a stiff and get juggled, did you?"

"Of course not," put in Bob. "Jim would have done the same thing."

"I'll be hanged if I would," said Jim. "I'd stop long enough to see whether my pal was done for or not."

"That's just what I did, Jim, and I thought you had been done for sure enough," put in Tom.

"So he did, Jim," said Bob, "for he came to my room and told me all about it. We both thought you had been wiped out."

By degrees Jim was mollified, and he agreed to continue with them.

"I don't go into any more carriage-houses in the dark," he added, however.

"Have you no bruise, or wound, anywhere to show where you were hit?" Bob asked, after awhile.

"If I have I don't know it. I seemed to be hit all over at once, and every joint in me seemed to come apart."

"Well, it beats all," said Bob. "I can't understand it."

"Nor can I. I guess that young Reade has got up some new-fangled thing to knock a man out when he goes about the machine."

"I didn't see anything of the kind when he went away this morning," remarked Bob.

"No," added Bob, "though there's no telling what he had in that valise he carries strapped behind his seat on the tricycle."

"Well, he's off and we are losing time here," remarked Bob. "We must take the train and run down to a point ahead of him somewhere. I think we'd better go down far enough to give us time to walk a mile or two up the road, meet him in some secluded place, stop him and break up his machine, or else hold him a prisoner in the woods a couple of days, and thus give the bicycles a chance to catch up."

"That's the idea. Come on. The train leaves in a half-hour, and Reade has been gone nearly an hour."

They took two or three more drinks, and then went down to the depot to take the first train bound southward.

Barney and Pomp were on the same train with them. But they kept so shady that they were not seen by the three villains.

On the train the great race was the only topic of conversation. Everybody seemed to be interested in it, and the sentiment appeared to be in the young inventor's favor.

When about thirty miles out, they struck a station through which the tricycle had passed about a half-hour before. A good-sized crowd awaited the arrival of the train, hoping to get some news of the bicyclists.

That was all they asked about when the train arrived.

"Oh, they are way behind," said a train-hand to the gaping crowd. "Those duffers are left."

The crowd cheered, and the train passed on.

In another hour the train caught up with the tricycle.



Then ensued a scene of wild, frantic cheering. The train men and passengers yelled themselves hoarse. The engineer blew his whistle for all it was worth. Frank returned the salute and cheers by waving the United States flag above his head.

Just at that point the road was a little rough, so he had to go slow. The train swept on and left him.

"On a smooth road I could keep up with it," said Frank, as he saw the train leaving him behind. "The roads down South are not kept in good order, by any means, and the further South I get the worse I will find them, I guess."

But he toiled on his way, making a number of stops to make sure of the crossings of creeks and other streams.

At one place he found a large sheet of water, which seemed to have backed up into the road from a dam below. Yet the tracks of wagons showed that they crossed there and went out on the other side.

Just a few rods below the roadside, he saw a boy about his own age fishing.

"Hello!" he called to him.

"Hello!" answered the boy, dropping his tackle and running forward.

"How can I get over this water?"

"Drive right through, as they all do," was the reply. "I say!"

"Well?"

"What kind of a thingumbob is that, anyhow?"

"It's a tricycle."

"Tri—what?"

"Tricycle."

The youth walked around it and looked over and under it, his eyes almost bulging out of their sockets.

"Durned if t'ain't a new-fangled injine made to run on dirt roads!" he exclaimed.

"That's just what it is, my friend," said Frank. "This water isn't too deep for me, is it?"

"No, just up to a buggy hub. I say!"

"Well?"

"Where did you get it?"

"I made it."

"You made it!"

"Yes. I am the inventor of it."

"Well, I'll be durned! I say!"

"Well?"

"What's it for, anyhow?"

"To travel in. Do I go right straight across to the other side?"

"Yes. I say!"

"Well?"

"Gimme a ride?"

"I can't do that. There's only room for one, you see," and Frank started into the water.

The youth, nothing daunted, darted forward and caught on behind, intending to mount up on the valise.

When Frank looked back and saw him there he concluded to give him a little surprise which he would recollect the rest of his life. Accordingly, when the tricycle was about half-way across the pond, he turned on a pretty strong current of electricity through the steel.

The youth gave a yell, and bounced off into the water, which was about two feet deep.

"Hello!" cried Frank. "What's the matter? Why don't you keep your seat? Climb up out of the water."

"I say!"

"Well?"

"Drive on with your durned thingumbob!"

"All right. Good-bye," and Frank drove across, while the youth waded back to his own side, a wiser, if not a better, lad.

Bob Decker and his two comrades got off at a small town that lay in the route the race was to go, and prepared to go out on the road to meet our hero.

Barney and Pomp kept them in sight, and guided their movements by those of the three villains.

As soon as they learned by which road the young hero was expected to come, Decker and his pals set out on foot—singly, so as not to excite suspicion—to meet him a mile or two out of town.

Barney and Pomp took to the woods by the roadside, so as to avoid being seen, and kept up with them.

A couple of miles out they halted and sat down under the shade of a spreading oak. The two spies crept up as near as they dared, and listened to their talk. They were too far off, however, for them to hear anything of moment.

By and by one of the men sprang up and exclaimed:

"There he comes!"

They immediately adjusted black dominoes to their faces and waited in the bushes till the tricycle came along.

The road was too rough at that point to permit very fast driving, so when young Reade came nearly opposite them they rushed out and grabbed hold of the big wheels and held it, while Decker said:

"We want you to stop awhile, young man, and if you want to keep a whole skin you had better keep quiet and do as you are told."

Frank was thunderstruck.

He was taken completely by surprise, and stared at the speaker.

"Why, what does this mean?" he demanded.

"It means that you are to stop awhile," was the reply, "and give the other fellows a chance. Will you get out, or must I give you a bullet?"

"Oh, I'll get down. Three to one is rather too much for me. Just hold the wheels steady till I get out, will you?"

"Yes. Be quick about it," and all three took firm hold on the wheels, to hold them steady, as they thought.

But instead of getting down, Frank turned on a current of electricity that laid all three in a heap in the road, too badly stunned to know what had happened to them.

"Whoop!" yelled a voice in the bushes, and the next moment Barney and Pomp rushed out and surrounded Frank as he leaped to the ground.

"Hello! You here?"

"Yis, begorra! It's watchin' 'em we wor."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp. "We wan't er-gwine ter let 'em hurt yer, Marse Frank."

"Nor was I going to let 'em, either," was the reply of the young hero. "I gave 'em a shock that knocked 'em stiff. Take their weapons away from them, Barney."

"Yis, sorr," and in another minute Barney was in possession of three revolvers, and as many ugly-looking knives.



"Now take off those masks and let's see who they are."

Pomp snatched away the black dominoes, and the faces of the three men were exposed to view.

Frank stepped forward and stood over Bob Decker, looking down at him as if something in the upturned face seemed familiar to him.

"I've seen him before somewhere," he said, gazing first at one and then the other. "But just where, I can't remember."

"Bedad," exclaimed Barney, "it's mesilf as saw yer shake hands wid him at Paducah."

"Ah! I remember now. He was in the crowd at the hotel."

"Yis, sorr."

"The dirty rascals! They ought to be tarred and feathered and ridden ten miles on a rail."

"Dat's er fac'," assented Pomp.

"They have been hired by gamblers to stop me till the other fellows catch up. I'm glad I gave 'em such a good dose."

The three men were almost killed by the shock they had received. They were unconscious for upward of a half-hour. Then Tom Wilder was the first one to recover.

He opened his eyes, and groaned as if in the greatest agony.

Frank motioned to Barney and Pomp to get back into the bushes out of sight, and wait for a signal from him to come forward.

They quickly obeyed.

Then Frank turned to the groaning rascal, and asked:

"What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, Lord!" groaned the wretch. "I'm broken all to pieces! Oh—oh! Ugh!"

"Why, what ails you? You seem to be in great pain. Shall I run into town for a doctor?"

By this time Bob and Jim began to recover, and their groans were mingled with Tom's.

"Well, you all seem to be down with something," said Frank. "Is the cholera raging down here in this part of the country?"

"Oh, lord! oh, lord! I'm nearly dead!" moaned Jim and Bob together.

"Why, what in thunder is the matter with you fellows!" cried Frank. "Where are you wounded? I don't see any blood or bruises on any of you."

"I've been struck by lightning," said Bob. "Every joint in my body aches."

"Oh, that's all nonsense," said our hero. "There isn't a cloud overhead, and so there can't be any lightning about. Get up and see if you are all together."

They tried to get on their feet. They staggered like drunken men, groaning as if in agony.

Bob Decker was the first to gather his wits. He looked at the young inventor very suspiciously.

"You downed us nicely, didn't you?" he said.

"I should smile," replied Frank. "Neat trick, wasn't it?"

"Yes; you came near killing me."

"Oh, did I? I'll make a better job of it next time. The truth is, I am a new hand at this thing."

"What was it?" Tom Wilder asked, feeling himself to make sure that all of him was there.

"It's the same thing that struck me at Paducah," remarked Jim.

"It was lightning," said Frank. "It can knock out the best man that ever lived."

Bob began to feel for his revolver.

"What is it?" Frank asked. "Are you looking for your mask? Here it is. I notice you didn't wear it at Paducah the other night."

Hardened wretch that he was, the villain could not look the young hero in the face, when the latter threw the black domino at his feet.

Tom and Jim also felt for their weapons, as they saw things getting serious. Of course they missed them.

"I have your weapons," said Frank, very coolly, "and am going to turn them over to the sheriff of this county, if I can find him without losing too much time."

"You have no right to rob us," said Bob Decker, recovering his effrontery.

"Of course not. I had the right to knock down and disarm a trio of shameless rascals though, and did it."

"Give me my weapons!" hissed Decker, advancing menacingly upon him, "or I'll choke the life out of you!"

"Yes—don't choke me, and I'll give 'em back to you in small parcels—one bullet at a time. Just come another step nearer and I'll give you one," and he held the revolver cocked and pointed at the breast of the wretch.

Decker recoiled, his face turning livid with fear.

"Don't shoot!" he gasped.

Tom and Bob stood close together; Jim was nearer the edge of the woods.

"Say!" cried Frank, "all three of you march on ahead now, and walk straight, or I'll give you a shower of bullets."

"What are you up to?"

"March, I tell you, or I'll give you lead to eat!"

"I won't go," said Bob. "And you dare not shoot a man down in cold blood."

"Oh, you think so, do you?" and Frank coolly raised the revolver and aimed at him.

The rascal dropped on his knees.

"Don't shoot! I'll go!" he cried.

"Well, you'd better. You don't suppose I'd stand on ceremony with such rascals as you, do you?"

Bob marched forward to the middle of the road in front of the tricycle.

Tom and Jim stood where they were.

"Come—march, I tell you!"

Jim slowly turned and walked forward to join Bob. Tom seized the opportunity to dart back into the woods.

Frank fired at him, and he yelled as if hit.

"Hi, dar—stop!" yelled Pomp in the bushes, giving chase to the rascal.

Barney yelled also and joined in the chase. Frank ran forward a few paces and then stopped.

He did not care to go any further. But when he turned toward the tricycle, a cry of astonishment escaped him.

Bob and Jim had disappeared.

They had availed themselves of the little diversion to dart into the woods and get away.



"Gone, by jiminy!" exclaimed Frank. "I intended to jail the gang, but they have given me the slip."

Barney and Pomp did their best to catch Tom Wilder, but failed. He was fleet of foot, and badly scared withal, and did his best under the circumstances.

"I am sorry they got away," he said, as he stood there in the middle of the road near his tricycle. "It would have added to my triumph to have put them in jail at the next village. I can't help it, I suppose."

Barney and Pomp soon came back, and reported that the "spalpeen" had made good his escape.

"Oh, it's all right, Barney. I guess they won't trouble me any more."

"Dat's er fac'!" said Pomp, chuckling over the affair as if he were greatly amused.

"Well, you have done well," said Frank. "Meet me at Memphis and anywhere else you please. When we get to New Orleans we'll have a big jubilee over our victory."

"Whoop!" yelled Barney. "Its red the ould town will be whin we git loose wid it."

## CHAPTER VII.

### BARNEY AND POMP HAVE A BATTLE WITH DECKER AND HIS GANG.

"I HAVE no time to lose, you know," Frank said, as he shook hands with the two faithful fellows. "I must be off. If you see those fellows again, just give 'em away in any crowd they may be in. It may have the effect to send them back home. They were hired by some gamblers to make me lose this race, and may try some other dodge."

He then mounted the tricycle and dashed away at full speed.

Barney and Pomp walked back into the village, chuckling over the ignominious defeat of the St. Louis rascals.

At the village Frank stopped only long enough to get full information in regard to his route. Then he pushed on, and made the best time possible to the next town, where he stopped for the night.

Bob Decker and his thievish comrades met in the woods after Barney and Pomp gave up the pursuit.

They were panting for breath, and their clothes were badly torn by the bushes and briars.

They looked at each other in a profound silence for several minutes. Then Bob burst into a furious storm of profanity. He swore worse than a dozen pirates could have done.

"Beaten and disarmed!" he hissed, "and by a boy not yet out of his teens! Three of us—all old hands at such business too. I say, boys, we must keep shady on this, or never show our faces in St. Louis again."

"Yes—we must keep dark," said Tom. "We couldn't hold up our heads at home if the boys found it out. I was never so broke up in all my life."

"Nor I," put in Jim. "That's the way I was knocked out up at Paducah. What in creation was it?"

"Why, it was an electric shock, of course," said Bob. "He played us for flats when he asked us to hold the wheels till he got out. Then he turned on the electricity, and we got it. Lord, I thought I was done for that time."

"So did I. My joints ache yet."

"So do mine."

"Well, I'll never rest till I get square with him. I'll follow him down to New Orleans but what I'll fetch 'im."

"We haven't got any weapons, and our clothes are badly torn," suggested Jim.

"Oh, we can get clothes and weapons without any trouble," said Bob. "I have my pocket-book all right."

"So's mine," said the other two.

They produced their watches and purses, and then started off to the village, which they reached in about an hour.

To their very great relief, they discovered that Frank had said nothing about them as he passed through the village.

Barney and Pomp saw them, and laughed heartily when they heard them tell a cock-and-bull story to account for the condition of their clothes, but they did not say anything till Barney heard Tom Wilder make a disparaging remark about the young tricyclist.

Then the indignant Irishman asked him:

"Where are the dominoes you and your friends had on this morning?"

"We never had any on," replied Tom.

"Bedad, thin, it's bloind I am," said Barney, "for it's mesilf as saw yez wid one on."

"You are mistaken, my friend," said Bob Decker, taking the defense up himself.

"Yez didn't, eh? Bedad, ye did, an' ye lost yer pistols an' knives. Och, but the bye claned yez out loike a jiffy!"

"What are you giving me?"

"The plain throoth, bedad, an' there's the naygur as saw the racket wid me," and then he and Pomp gave away the whole racket to a gaping crowd of villagers.

Decker denied the whole story, and wanted to fight Barney. So did Tom and Jim.

"Bedad, av yez come one at a toime I'll whip the three av yer," and he began shedding his coat.

But all three wanted to fight him at once.

"Look heah, Barney!" cried Pomp, "lef me hab two ob dem chaps. Den you kin lick one."

"Yes!" cried the villagers, who were eager for the fight, seeing that all the party were strangers.

"I don't want to fight a nigger," said Tom.

"Nor I," put in Jim.

"But you'll have to do it for all that," said a village bully, who constituted himself master of ceremonies. "I believe the Irishman's yarn."

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, rolling up his sleeves and displaying a pair of brawny arms that made Decker turn pale at sight of them. "Lave me get at the blaggard!"

Decker was unarmed.

He was forced to defend himself with such weapons as nature had given him, and in a contest of that kind he was no match for Barney O'Shea.

Barney had not been in a ruction for a long time, and so he went in for real enjoyment. He knocked the St. Louis tough right and left at his pleasure.

In the meantime, Tom undertook to go to Decker's assistance.

"Hol' on, dar!" cried Pomp, planting himself before him. "Don't go dar, I tole yer!"

Tom made a vicious blow at Pomp's nose, intending to knock him out in one round. But Pomp ducked his head



and planted it in Tom's stomach, with such force as to lay him all in a heap on the ground, the sickest man in all Tennessee.

The crowd roared with delight.

They had not witnessed such a circus in a long time.

"Go it, Pomp!" they yelled.

Jim sprung at Pomp with the intention of downing him. He really understood the art of sparring. But the two severe shocks he had received from the tricycle had relieved him of much of his prowess and vital force.

He got in two blows on Pomp's head, and then felt the woolly battering-ram against his stomach. He went to grass, knocked completely out of time.

"Git up dar, boss," said Pomp. "You'se ain't good for nuffin'."

Tom arose with a stone in his hand.

Barney and Decker were having a lively set-to.

Pomp rushed at Tom, head down, and Tom fired the stone.

It grazed Pomp's shoulder and struck Decker's knee.

Down went Bob.

The next moment Tom was struck in the stomach by Pomp's head, and went down utterly insensible.

Jim made one more sally, and one more collision with Pomp's head settled him.

He lay down and groaned.

"Enuff, eh!" cried Pomp, shaking his head as he looked contemptuously down at his foes.

The crowd yelled like so many lunatics. All the village had crowded around the spot. The negroes grinned from ear to ear, and wanted to shake hands with Pomp.

The white men shook hands with both Barney and Pomp, and invited them to drink with them. Barney could not refuse their kind invitations, and in a very little while felt that he was able to lick the whole town.

Pomp managed to get him away in time to catch the Memphis train.

Decker and his two pals were glad to get away from the village on foot.

A couple of miles out of town they hired a farmer to take them to the next station on the railroad.

There they got passage on a freight-train, and hastened on to Memphis, which they reached that night in time to learn that young Reade had not yet turned up there.

"We have time to get ready for him again," said Decker.

"I am going to get square with him if I have to shoot him."

"Yes," said Bob's two companions. "We would have had him all right if we had not caught hold of that electric machine."

"Of course we would. We know enough to let it alone now."

"I guess I do!" remarked Jim. "I've had two doses of it. I want to give him a dose of the same stuff. That would give me satisfaction enough."

"We must hunt up some disguises, and then lay for him again."

"Yes—but how about our eyes? They look awful."

And so they did.

Each man had received a blow under the eyes that frescoed them in the highest style of the art.

They looked crestfallen, indeed, when they surveyed the handiwork of Barney and Pomp.

"We want a revolver each," said Decker. "If I ever meet that Irishman again, I'll make him the head man in a funeral procession."

"I just want to get a fair chance at that nigger," hissed Tom Wilder. "I'll make short work of his battering-ram. I was never butted so before in all my life."

"Nor I either," put in Jim. "Who ever heard of any one butting like a goat before? I could stand being butted by a white man, but a nigger—ugh! Just let me get a chance to draw a bead on him, and you'll see a dead nigger with his toes turned up."

They went around the city and bought weapons and clothes. But on inquiry they could not find an artist who could conceal the marks of battle on their faces.

"Now, what shall we do?" Tom Wilder asked. "It won't do to go about with our eyes in mourning this way."

Decker was a man of many resources. He thought over the matter a little while, and then said:

"I have it. We may have some work that will require secrecy. We had better black up, and pass as negroes."

"By George!" exclaimed Tom, "the very thing for us!"

"Yes," said Jim, "and we won't ever be suspected. The niggers will get the credit for it if any mischief is done."

"That's why I think we had better select such a disguise."

So it was agreed that they assume the character of negroes, and take the train out of the city the next morning, and wait for the young inventor on the road somewhere below.

Having resolved, they lost no time in executing. Before midnight they had made all their arrangements.

In the meantime hundreds of gamblers from many Southern and Southwestern cities came flocking to Memphis to see the famous young inventor on whose race they had staked so much money.

Frank had stopped about forty miles out of the city, at a small village, the night before, and the next morning started out early to make the run to the city.

"I know I'll have ten thousand questions to answer when I get there," he said to himself as he set out, "but I guess I can stand it. About three or four days more and I'll be in the Crescent City. I wonder where Spreckels and Harrison are this morning? They are tired enough, I'll wager. It's fun for a few hours, or maybe a day, but when they strike out for a week's run they will soon get sick of it. I'll telegraph back and inquire for them when I get to Memphis."

It took him over three hours to make the forty miles. There were many vehicles along the road, going toward this city; and in many places the roads were in wretched condition.

But he toiled faithfully up hill and down dale, till at last the spires of the city by the great river came into view.

On the edge of the town he met several hundred men on horseback and in vehicles. The Memphis Club of Bicy-



cyclists had also turned out to welcome him and escort him into the city.

They made the welkin ring with cheers when they saw him wave the stars and stripes above his head, and the bicyclists dashed forward to meet him.

The president of the club ran up alongside of him, and said:

"Mr. Reade, the Bicycle Club of Memphis welcome you to the city, and tender you their hospitality while you remain in the city."

"Thank you, a thousand times, sir," replied Frank. "I did not expect such courtesy from bicyclists."

"We regard a tricycle as a practical improvement on the bicycle," said the president of the club, "and therefore claim you as one of us."

"Well, that's the way I look at it, too. You are the only bicyclists I have met who agree with me on that point. Your club could not have been represented at the Chicago Convention."

"Yes, we were, but our delegate was too modest to make any opposition to anything that was done or said there. Allow us to escort you into the city."

The president of the club then gave his orders, and the bicyclists formed themselves into a double line, and rolled on into the city, leading the way as a guard of honor.

Frank enjoyed the situation very much. On the way he asked:

"Do you know where Spreckels and Harrison were last night?"

"Yes," was the reply, "they stopped at Paducah, Kentucky, last night. The dispatches in this morning's papers state that they are fresh and buoyant, and hopeful of winning the race."

Frank laughed.

"Well, I am glad they feel hopeful. I am very hopeful myself, and know how good it is to feel so. But they will lose, for all their hopefulness."

"That's what we think here in Memphis," said the bicyclist, "but we shall show them every courtesy in our power when they reach our city."

"That's right. I appreciate your motive all the more since hearing you say that."

They escorted him down through Main street, where thousands of people lined the sidewalks to see him and his wonderful invention.

One of the best hotels in the city had prepared a banquet for the Bicycle Club and their guests. A dozen prominent citizens had been invited to be present.

"Gentlemen," said Frank, when he saw what preparations had been made to receive him, "I feel grateful for your kindness to me. But I have set out to win this race; hence, have little time to lose. If you detain me beyond two hours, I shall be under the impression that you are working against me in the interests of my competitors."

They laughed and applauded him.

"You shall go at the end of two hours," said the chairman of the club, "though a whole day would not endanger your chances in my opinion."

"Thanks again, but I cannot be tempted to try it."

The dinner was a grand affair, and the young inventor

enjoyed it hugely. Short speeches were made in response to toasts, and then the young hero related some of his experiences on the road. His story of the chase of the dog was greeted with roars of laughter.

At the end of the two hours he was ready to leave and go still further South. But he wondered what had become of Barney and Pomp. He had seen nothing of them since entering the city.

"Can anything have happened to them?" he asked himself a dozen times.

Just as he was about to mount the tricycle, Barney pushed his way through the crowd to get to him.

"Stand back!" ordered a policeman, seizing him by the collar and pushing him roughly back into the crowd.

"Sure, an' he's my own mather's son!" protested the faithful fellow.

"Stand back, I say, or I'll club the head off of you!" and the officer brandished his club in very close proximity to Barney's head.

"Bad cess till ye!" exclaimed Barney. "May yer hid ache for a wake!"

Frank heard his voice, and recognized it.

"Hello, Barney!" he cried, standing up in the tricycle. "Come here. I've been looking for you ever since reaching the city. Where have you been?"

"Faith, an' I've been thrying to find a gentleman wid police clothes. They don't kape 'em hyer. They're all blaggards."

The policeman wanted to club him, but dared not strike him after the young lion of the hour had so publicly recognized him. He allowed him to get to Frank's side, where the two shook hands very cordially.

"Where is Pomp?" Frank asked.

"Back in the crowd there. Faith, an' they'd break his hid av he thried to get at yez."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" and the young hero's face wore a flush of indignation. "Because he is a black man they would not let him get to me. I'll see about it," and he again stood up in the seat of the tricycle and looked over the crowd.

"I have a colored servant in this crowd somewhere," he said, in a loud voice, so that all could hear. "He has not been allowed to see me. I want to see him. Pomp! Pomp! where are you?"

"Hyar I is, Marse Frank!" answered Pomp, over in a dense mass of people in the street.

"Come here."

He began elbowing his way through the crowd. The good-natured populace gave way for him, and in a few minutes Pomp reached up and shook hands with him.

"My greatest danger is between here and New Orleans," he said to both of them, in very low tones. "Keep up a sharp lookout. Meet me anywhere you please. You have the route."

They both said they would meet him wherever they could, shook hands with him, and then stepped back into the crowd.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE DESTROYED BRIDGE—ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD

ON leaving Memphis Frank found the country quite level.



But the roads were not kept up in good condition as they were further up North.

A fence ran along both sides of the road, as there were no stock laws in the Southern States at that time. Hogs and cattle roamed at will. Every farmer had to keep up fences to protect his crops from depredations by cattle.

Those fences bothered our hero not a little, for they prevented him from leaving the road when he would otherwise have done so very often.

Sometimes he found big "mud-holes," as they were called down there, right in the center of the road. He had to go through them, and to do so he had to go slow. Very often a dozen hogs would be reposing in the soft ooze of the puddle. Once they came very near upsetting him in a puddle by scrambling up only when the wheels touched them.

"This is where Spreckels and Harrison will gain on me," he said, as he struck several mud holes. "There's room enough for one wheel to get round these pesky places without slackening speed. But two wheels have to go through 'em. It won't do to run them. I'd get thrown into the very first one. If I was only acquainted with the road I'd travel all night, for I don't think Spreckels and Harrison are above playing a trick on me to win this race."

About forty miles below the city he found a corduroy bridge that had spanned a creek torn away, rendering it impossible for any kind of vehicle to cross it.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, stopping suddenly and gazing at the wreck of the bridge. "This looks suspicious. This has not been done an hour, I am sure," and he got down and walked forward to inspect the mischief that had been done.

Just as he reached the edge of the creek three black men ran out of the thicket into the road, thus getting between him and the tricycle.

Their actions told but too plainly that they were enemies. So, without waiting for them to speak a word, he drew his revolver and fired at the foremost one, who gave a groan and staggered back into the thicket.

"Blast the kid!" hissed one of the others. "He's game. Shoot him down!" and he drew his revolver to fire. But ere he could get it out Frank gave him a bullet in his right arm. His pistol fell from his hand to the ground at his feet. The third man fired one shot and then took to his heels, disappearing into the thicket as fast as his heels could carry him.

The man who had been hit in the arm cried:

"Don't shoot!"

"Well, make yourself scarce, or I'll fill you full of lead!" cried Frank, who was excited enough to shoot at anything or anybody.

The man without uttering another word turned and ran into the woods, quickly disappearing from view.

It was all over in less than two minutes, and Frank found himself alone again.

"I guess I'd better get away from here," he said.

"They may give me a shot from the woods."

He ran back to the tricycle and climbed into the seat as quickly as he could. Then he turned round to go back the

way he had come. As he did so he heard a pistol-shot, and a bullet whistled close to his head.

The tricycle started.

Another shot and a bullet struck the leather cushion of his seat, and passed almost through it.

The next moment he dashed away up the road at the rate of ten or fifteen miles to the hour. A minute or so and he was out of the reach of danger.

"They were not negroes," he said, as he dashed along the road. "At least, the fellow that spoke was not. I know the negro's voice too well for that. He was a white man blackened up for that dirty job. I guess the others were of the same kidney. Confound them! I hope all three got hit. I know that two of them were."

He made a run of about three miles back up the road, and stopped at a farm-house.

"Hello!" he sung out.

Half a dozen little negroes and as many dogs came running round from behind the house. How the dogs barked and the little mokes stared!

"Is your master at home?" our hero asked.

Every little darkey grinned and climbed up on the fence to get a good look at the stranger. Not one of them thought to answer the question. They stared and grinned. Even had one of them spoken, Frank could not have understood, on account of the racket raised by the dogs.

But a big black negress appeared from a cabin in the rear of the main house, and came toward the gate.

With a few words she quieted the dogs, and then making a courtesy to Frank, said:

"Howdy, massa?"

"Howdy?" said Frank. "Is your master at home?"

"Speck he is, sah," she answered. "Mebbe he's down in de field wid de han's. You Abe, yer little brack debbil, run down in de fiel' and tell Marse Lem dat a gem'an wants fo' ter see 'im!"

A little moke, black as the ace of spades, and dressed in a single garment reaching to his knees, and of the color of the soil of the premises, darted away as fast as his heels could carry him.

The negress eyed him and the tricycle so quizzically that Frank said:

"You have never seen a buggy like this before?"

"No, sah," she said. "Whar's de hoss, sah?"

"Just wait, and, I'll show you," and he took a turn round the open space in front of the gate.

The negress' eyes opened to their widest. Then she moved uneasily back from the fence as Frank drove up to it. She was not sure it was not the result of Voodooism, and did not care to touch it.

"Oh, it won't hurt you," said Frank, laughing.

"Wouldn't you like to take a ride on it?"

"No, sah!" and she retreated still further back into the house-yard.

Just then "Marse Lem" appeared—a tall, muscular specimen of the Mississippi planter. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and wore a wide-brimmed straw hat that had evidently seen more than one season's service.

"Howdy do, sir?" he greeted our hero, as he came forward to the gate.

Frank bowed, and said:



"I am on my way to New Orleans. About three miles below here I found the bridge over a creek torn up. Three black men, whom I took to be white men in disguise, attacked me. I opened fire on them, and sent them into the woods. Then I came away. A bullet lodged in this cushion here. See there!" and he showed the bullet-hole to him.

The man seemed to be deeply interested. He asked:

"How long since were you at the bridge?"

"Not more than a half-hour. I came back here on good time, to ask if you could direct me, so I could find another place to cross without losing much time."

"No, there's no other place. My wife is on a visit to the other side of that creek. We must fix that bridge again."

There was an air of quiet determination about the man that impressed Frank very favorably.

The Southerner turned and gave an order to a little darkey, who hastened away at full speed.

In ten minutes about twenty able-bodied negro men appeared in the yard with axes on their shoulders.

"We'll have it fixed in an hour or so," said the planter.

The negroes started out on foot. The master mounted a horse a few minutes later, and said:

"Now we'll go down and see about it."

Frank started the tricycle, and the planter exclaimed:

"That is the first vehicle of that kind I've seen."

"It's the only one of the kind in existence," replied Frank.

"What do you call it?"

"An electric tricycle."

"How is it run?"

"By electricity. The battery is under the seat."

"How fast can it go?"

"About twenty to twenty-five miles an hour on a good road."

The planter opened his eyes in astonishment. He gazed the young man in the face, as if to make sure he was not talking to a lunatic, and asked:

"Where did you get it?"

"Invented it myself, and had it built in Chicago."

"What is your name, young man?"

"Frank Reade, Jr., son of Frank Reade, the inventor of Readestown, up in Wisconsin."

"Ah! I have heard of your father. He invented a steam-horse, didn't he?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did it work?"

"Splendidly."

"What did he do with it?"

"He uses it yet in plowing his prairie-land," said Frank.

"Indeed! Is it cheaper than a horse?"

"No, sir, only it can do more hard, steady work than a horse can. Then you can't ride him, you know. He is too hot."

"Yes. I suppose so. Well, the Reade family seems to have a good deal of inventive genius."

Frank blushed and said:

"Well, I don't know whether it is genius or not. When I want anything I haven't got, I set about making it. That's the way I got up this thing. I am running a race

now against two gentlemen from Chicago to New Orleans."

"Is that so? Then you want to get over that creek as fast as you can?"

"Yes, sir."

"I understand things now," said the planter. "I see why you were shot at and the bridge torn up. They want to stop you. I didn't believe your story at first. Come, we must hurry up. Those negroes will have you across in a half hour," and the kind-hearted planter hurried forward, Frank following as fast as the nature of the road would permit.

When they reached the creek, they found that the negroes had just arrived. They went to work, however, and threw the timber around lively.

Twenty able-bodied men can do a great deal of work in an hour. By that time they had the bridge up.

"Now you can go over, sir," said the planter to our hero.

"Will you not allow me to give your men something?" Frank asked, "to show my appreciation of your kindness."

"Yes, if you wish to do so."

"Here is a ten-dollar bill. Will you have it changed and divided equally among them?"

"Yes," and the planter took the bill and transferred it to his pocket.

The negroes grinned from ear to ear, and said:

"Thankee, massa."

Frank then shook hands with the planter and thanked him for his kindness, and then started over the bridge.

He moved slowly, but once on the other side he set out with all the speed he could safely use on such a road.

"That planter is a square man all over," said Frank.

"I'll never forget him as long as I live."

He pushed on, and in an hour or so a thunder-storm came up. The lightning flashed terribly.

"By Georget!" he exclaimed, "if the steel in this tricycle should catch hold of a streak of that lightning I'd never see New Orleans. I've a mind to stop and leave it till the lightning is done flashing."

But he did not leave it.

The rain soon came down in torrents. He hoisted his big umbrella, which he had expressly prepared for such an emergency, and kept on his way.

The rain poured for three hours, and the water ran along the road in a stream almost as big as the creek he had just crossed.

"I can't go very fast through all this water and mud," he said, "but I will keep on, anyhow. The sun is not more than an hour high. I wonder if I can reach the next town before darkness sets in?"

Just then he overtook a wagon which was moving lazily along the road. The driver was a plain old countryman, who was evidently going to the nearest town to trade.

"How far is it to town?" he asked of the countryman.

"Six miles," was the reply.

Then the old man turned around to look at the questioner.

He expected to see a man either on horseback, or in a buggy.

But when he saw the tricycle, and that it was running



without the aid of horse-flesh, he reined up his two mules with a

"Whoa, there!"

Then he stared at the tricycle.

"What in creation have yer got thar, mister?" he asked.

"Oh, it's a new style of buggy," was the reply.

The old man got down off his wagon and came back to look at it.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Frank. "But I am in a great hurry to reach town. Will you be so kind as to lead your team to one side a bit so I can pass."

"Yes," and the old man hurriedly led his team to the side of the road and gave Frank room enough to pass.

"Thank you," said Frank. "Just see how my buggy can travel now."

There was a smooth, level road for nearly a mile ahead of him, and he sent the tricycle flying over it at full speed, to the intense amazement of the old countryman.

"The old chap will have something to think about," laughed our hero, looking back at the surprised old man.

When he reached the village he found that not a soul in the place had ever heard a word about the race, and therefore did not expect him. He drove up to the little village tavern and leaped to the ground.

A half a dozen loungers were hanging around the bar-room of the tavern. The moment they caught sight of the strange vehicle, they rushed out and crowded around it, wondering what it was.

"How far is it to the next town?" Frank asked of the landlord.

"Eighteen miles, and a bad road," was the reply.

"Then I'll stop with you if you can give me accommodations for man and beast."

"Of course I can. But where's the beast?"

"There he is," said Frank, pointing to the tricycle, "and as unruly a beast as ever traveled."

The landlord and the loungers looked at the "beast," and thought him the most wonderful thing they had ever seen in their lives.

"Don't touch him or he'll kick," said Frank, laughing.

Then turning to the landlord, he asked for a hot supper.

"I came from Memphis to-day," he added, "and have had but one meal on the way."

"Memphis to-day!" exclaimed the landlord. "Why it's one hundred and forty miles to Memphis!"

"Yes, so it is. If you people kept decent roads in this part of the country I could have made fifty miles more very easily."

"Great Scott!" gasped the landlord.

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed another.

"Old Nick and Tom Walker!" ejaculated a third.

By this time the crowd had increased to about two score, half of whom were negroes. They hung around the tricycle, looking here and there and everywhere.

By and by one of them caught hold of it with one hand, and lifted the wheel off the ground.

"It isn't very heavy," he said.

Then he went round to the other side to lift that.

This time he took hold with both hands, and got a shock that raised his hair.

It made him raise his voice, too, for he yelled like a Co-

manche Indian, and reeled backward with such force as to knock down a negro who was standing near.

"What's the matter? what's the matter?" a score or more asked, rushing to the spot.

"My God!" groaned the man, feeling himself all over, "I've been struck by lightning."

"The deuce! There hasn't been any lightning around here since the storm passed."

"What was it, then? I feel as if every joint in my body had been pulled apart."

In crowding around the man another one leaned against the wheel. He got a dose, and it knocked him all in a heap. He yelled worse than the first one did, and rolled over on the ground.

That created a panic.

They didn't know anything about electricity. Had never heard of receiving shocks of that kind from electric batteries, hence they became suspicious that something was wrong.

They made a rush, and cleared out from the vicinity of the tricycle as if they regarded it as an infernal machine.

The landlord rushed into the supper-room, where Frank was eating a broiled chicken, and said:

"What's the matter with that machine? Two men have been hurt by it."

"Why, I guess they have been taking hold of it," said Frank. "My horse won't let strangers touch him."

The landlord was greatly exercised, and went out and repeated what Frank had said.

A big bully, such as may be found in almost every little town in the Southwest, said:

"That youngster is too smart by just one-half. If he comes out here I'll give him a dose that'll beat his machine horse all hollow!" and he went into the bar-room to hoist in several drinks of fire-water.

By and by Frank came into the office of the little tavern, when the bully spoke to him:

"I say, youngster!"

Frank turned round and looked at him.

"Did you speak to me, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, I did."

"My name is Reade, not youngster, if you please."

"Why, blast your liver!" gasped the bully, "I kin swallow you whole and still be hungry!"

"Maybe you can," was the quiet reply; "but if you do you'll have more brains in your stomach than in your head."

The crowd laughed.

The bully could not stand that.

He gave a yell, and made a grab at the young inventor.

Frank sprung back beyond his reach, drew his revolver, and aimed it at his head.

"Stop this nonsense and behave yourself," he said, "or I'll fill you full of lead. I've met such men as you before, and know just how to manage them."

The bully recoiled from before the weapon, his eyes glaring and his face ashen-hued.

"Don't shoot!" he gasped.

"Well, behave yourself, then. You can't play bully round me."

The bully was defeated in the presence of the men he



been bullying for years, and by a mere boy at that. He went out of the tavern crestfallen and ashamed. Henceforth his prestige was gone. He would no longer ride roughshod over the citizens of the town. They had seen him recoil from a pistol in the hand of the young stranger.

"By gum!" exclaimed the landlord, "I never saw Jed back down before. He crawfished—by gum!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### STOPPED BY AN ALLIGATOR.

THE bully was not seen about the tavern again that night, and a dozen citizens congratulated the young hero in having squelched him.

"It's the only way to deal with such men," said Frank. "He is big enough to whip two of my size. I'd have shot him had he laid a hand on me. I had no other way to protect myself. Such men ought to be shot. He wanted to pick a quarrel with me, slap my face, and then strut around like a turkey-cock. He made a mistake in his man."

He then told the crowd all about the great race he was running, and everybody in the village at once became his friend.

As the news spread, more kept coming in to see him and the tricycle. The mystery of the shocks received from the battery was explained.

But the negroes said that a man who could bottle up lightning and use it to run a wagon must be the Evil One, and so they kept at a respectful distance from both him and his wagon.

He spent a pleasant evening at the little tavern, and went to bed at ten o'clock, telling the landlord that he wanted to leave before sunrise the next morning.

The landlord had him up betimes, and a hot breakfast awaited him when he came down-stairs.

The tricycle had remained all night standing before the door of the tavern. Nobody had the courage to touch it after hearing how two men were nearly shaken out of their boots.

The morning was clear and beautiful when our hero started, and he was in hopes of being able to make a good run during the day. He wanted to reach Jackson, the capital of the State, before the day closed.

But the roads were not in a condition to allow it.

"I wonder where Barney and Pomp are?" he asked himself as he bowled along the road. "They must be along this way somewhere. I hope I won't have any more trouble on the way."

He rode a number of miles without meeting any one.

But about noon he met two men on horseback.

Both seemed well dressed and gentlemanly in deportment. He bowed to them, and was about to pass them, when one of them hailed him.

"Mr. Reade!"

"Hello!" said Frank. "That's my name."

The man smiled and said:

"Well, my name is Collins. I have come up from New Orleans to meet you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I have bet money on your race, and am quite confident that you will win."

"Of course I will. I started out with that intention."

"You will win a good deal of money if you beat the race, will you not?"

"No; not a cent for myself. I shall win \$2,000 for a charity institution in Chicago. The truth is, I don't believe in betting at all. I challenged Spreckels as I did merely to prove the superiority of my invention."

"Why don't you go in and make a big pile out of this thing for yourself?"

"Because I am not a gambler, and don't believe in betting."

"Nonsense. If you'll agree not to win this race I'll agree to give you \$10,000 in cash, and have the cash right here to give you."

"I won't agree to do anything of the kind, sir. I wouldn't lose this race for ten times ten thousand dollars."

"Ten thousand dollars are not to be had every day, my young friend," said Collins.

"I know that well enough, sir. But \$10,000 can't bribe me to lose this race, and thus cause my friends to lose several hundred thousand dollars."

"Your friends will look out for themselves. You must look to your own interest. I'll give you——"

"Nothing, for I will take nothing from you, sir," said Frank, interrupting him. The next moment he turned on a full head of power, and the tricycle dashed away like a deer.

He heard an exclamation, coupled with an oath, escape one of the two men on horseback. Then the clatter of their horses' hoofs told him that he was being pursued.

Looking ahead, he saw a long stretch of level road before him. The country in that section was one continuous level.

"I'll soon leave 'em far behind," he said, "if I don't meet with any accident or obstructions of any kind."

"Stop!" cried one of the furious riders behind him, "or I'll fire on you!"

Frank looked back.

The man was at least one hundred yards behind. He flourished a revolver in his hand.

"I may as well shoot, too," said the young hero, drawing his revolver.

Then holding the helm with a steady hand, he turned and fired at his pursuer.

The man seemed astounded at the action of the young inventor. He was about to halt and give up the chase. But his comrade, more daring than he, dashed past him at full speed, and opened fire on the tricycle.

Frank heard one of the bullets whistle pretty close to his head.

"That fellow means to hurt me if he can," muttered Frank, as he watched the furious rider. "His horse is a splendid animal. I wonder how long he can hold out at this speed."

"Crack! crack!" went the revolver.

The bullets went wide of the mark. Once only did Frank think the tricycle had been hit. He was not sure, however, and kept on his way at full speed.

Both men were now rushing forward with the despera-



ation of madmen. Frank saw that to be overtaken would be the end of his race, if not of himself. He therefore turned his attention to increasing his speed, as the safest and surest way of making his escape.

No longer able to watch his pursuers and guide the tricycle too, he settled down to business.

Grasping the helm with a firm hand, he turned on still more electric force. The machine fairly bounded over the level, sandy road.

Suddenly he heard a snap, and saw something like a snake or piece of rope flying through the air.

It was the rubber tire from the left driving-wheel.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "That's bad for me if I strike a road with stones in it before I can shake off these fellows."

But he did not stop to repair any damages. He had a half-dozen rubber tires in the chest under the seat, and knew that he could put one on when he got a chance.

Away he went, reeling off mile after mile.

After awhile he looked back, and found that his pursuers were nearly a quarter of a mile behind.

"Ah! horse-flesh can't stand the strain," he said. "Their horses are giving out. I shall soon shake 'em off."

The pursuers kept up the chase a half-hour longer, however, no doubt in the futile hope that something would happen to throw the fugitive into their hands.

But as the tricycle kept up the same rate of speed as when the race first began, the pursuers soon found themselves left far behind so they gave it up.

"Shook 'em off at last," said Frank, as he saw they had given up the race. "I'll go on a little further, and then stop and put on another rubber. If that wheel should strike a stone without a rubber on it, a break would be the result."

About five miles further on he came to a big spring by the roadside.

"I'll stop and have a drink of water, and then put on the tire," he said, coming to a halt and springing to the ground.

The drink of cold water greatly refreshed him. Then he opened the seat, took out a rubber tire, and stretched it on in the concaved groove of the wheel.

"I am all right now," he said, as he climbed up into the seat again. "They will have a sweet time catching up with me from behind. They may head me off, but on a smooth road I can beat any horse that ever lived."

A few miles further on he came to the village he had inquired about the night before. He stopped to get a drink of water, and exchange a few words with the citizens, and then was off again.

He was now well down in the warm regions of the lower Mississippi. The long hanging moss on the trees, the great magnolias and other tropical growths, were a never-ending source of interest to him. He had never seen such things before, and of course was much interested in everything he saw.

At one time he was a half-hour passing through a swamp over a corduroy road. He had to go slow—not more than three or four miles an hour. On either side the waters of the swamp harbored alligators and water-snakes.

As he bowled along near the lower end of the swamp, he

ran against a huge alligator. The reptile turned savagely and seized the fore wheel in his huge jaws.

With a cry of horror Frank turned on a full rush of the electric current. It went coursing through the steel of the frame-work of the tricycle like forked lightning, and killed the reptile perhaps quicker than one was ever killed before.

Of all things in the reptile or animal kingdom the alligator is the most tenacious of life. He is worse than the far-famed Salamander in that respect. But he can't stand lightning.

The alligator gave a convulsive wag of his tail, and then lay limp and lifeless across the road.

Frank let the current flow for a couple of minutes longer, to make sure of its work, and then turned it off.

Then he leaned over and looked at the monster.

"Ugh!" he shuddered. "It was a narrow escape. I never saw such an ugly customer in all my life."

He got down and went round to the fore wheel, which was fastened in the jaws of the monster.

He punched him with a stick to make sure he was dead. Then he tried to pry his mouth open.

It was no use.

The jaws were set like ribs of steel, defying all his strength to open them.

"Well, I'm stuck fast," he said, releasing his hold and surveying the situation. "Stuck in the jaws of a dead alligator. I wonder how I shall get loose from him."

After deliberating over the situation for several minutes, he went to the chest under the seat and took out a hatchet.

"I'll have to chop his head off," he said. "I don't see any other way of getting loose."

He went to work, chopping away at the neck of the scaly reptile. It was hard work getting under the scales.

Then, as he cut down into the flesh around the neck the odor of musk was almost too much for him. He staggered back two or three times for breath, and then went at it again.

After a hard half-hour's work he succeeded in severing the head from the body.

But the jaws were still set as firmly as ever, and he had a deal more chopping to do ere he was free.

It took nearly a half-hour longer to get loose from the head. But he finally cut it away, and found the wheel but little damaged.

"By George!" he exclaimed, wiping the perspiration from his brow, "it has cost me an hour's time to get loose from that monster."

Then he washed the blood from the hatchet, placed it back in the chest, and sprung upon the seat.

In another moment he was bounding over the corduroy road as fast as he dared to go, hoping he would not have the bad luck to come in contact with any more alligators before reaching New Orleans.

In about ten minutes he was out of the swamp and in the sandy road-bed again. Then he put on all his power, and made very good time.

When night came on he was in the midst of a great forest, through which the road ran. At times the long, clinging bunches of gray moss hung almost down to the road. He could reach out and catch it with his hand.



"Well, I'm bound to have some trouble yet," he said. "If the road is good I won't mind it. The electric light will give me all the light I want. But I am not sure of the road."

But he lit the electric head-light, and pushed on as fast as he could. Owls hooted in the great forests as he passed, making weird sounds that made his hair rise on end at times.

"This is pleasant—over the left," he muttered. "I'd rather be in bed in some nigger cabin than here in a strange country in a strange road, with such strange noises going on all around me."

After going about three miles that way, he saw lights right on through the woods, and heard a dog barking.

"That must be a farm-house," he said, and then he stopped and sung out:

"Halloo!"

"Hello!" came back in a strong, manly voice.

"Come out here, please," said the young inventor.

"All right."

A couple of minutes later two men came out to the road.

"How far is it to town?" Frank asked, as they came up.

"About twelve miles," was the reply.

"Whew! I can't make it to-night."

"I wouldn't try it," said the man. "It's very dark, and the road lies under moss nearly all the way."

"Can I stop here till morning?"

"Yes, if you can stand our fare."

"Oh, I can stand any kind of fare. Don't let that trouble you."

"What kind of a machine is that you are riding, mister?" the second man asked, unable to longer control his curiosity.

"It's a new kind of a buggy," said Frank, "which runs by electricity."

"Well, it beats anything I ever saw. Drive round this way, and follow me."

The man then led the way up a wagon-road, through a large gate that opened into the yard of an old-fashioned Southern farm-house.

"Here you are," said the man; "you can get out and put up your horse."

"My horse doesn't need to be put up, nor fed," remarked Frank, as he leaped to the ground.

"Ain't you afraid of thieves?"

"Not in the least. They can't steal my horse. He won't go with any one but me."

The man said no more, and Frank assisted him in getting the valise off, and then followed him into the house.

## CHAPTER X.

### CONCLUSION.

FRANK found the planter a very hospitable and intelligent man. His wife and daughters soon had a hot supper of ham, eggs, butter and coffee, with hot biscuits, ready for him.

While at supper he told the family the story of his long ride from Chicago to New Orleans, and how he had been pursued and shot at on the way by parties who were interested in the race.

"How far is it from here to New Orleans?" he asked.

"One hundred and nine miles," said the planter.

"How are the roads?"

"Very good, I believe."

"Then I shall reach there to-morrow evening."

"That's a fast run to make in one day."

"Yes, but I have made one hundred and seventy miles in one day. The roads up in Illinois are hard and level. There's too much sand down this way."

He spent a pleasant time till ten o'clock, when he retired.

The next morning he was up with the chickens. The family breakfasted with him, while a few stars were yet to be seen. They treated him well, and would accept no compensation.

"I shall let you hear from me when I get to New Orleans and back home," said Frank, as he shook hands with them.

"I have not met with so much kindness on my trip."

"We shall be very glad to hear from you," said the farmer's wife, "and hope that you will call on us if you ever pass this way again."

"Thanks. I hope I shall have that pleasure."

He mounted the seat, and was off in a moment.

The farmer and his family gazed after him as long as he was in sight.

"They are the cleverest people I have met," thought Frank. "I shall write to them, and send the daughter a handsome present when I get home."

As the farmer had said, the road was under moss pretty nearly all the way. The road was quite passable, but in some places under water a few inches.

The tricycle worked as well as ever, and made up for lost time whenever a good, smooth piece of road was struck.

Up to noon he made splendid time. In the afternoon he found some pretty bad roads.

"It's time I was meeting some more bicyclist betters," he remarked, as he bowled along. "They surely have not given up all hope of stopping me. I hope they have, though. I wonder where Spreckels and Harrison are now? Decker and his St. Louis roughs must have given up the job of stopping me. Hanged if I don't believe they were the niggers who tore up that bridge. If so, I can understand why they retired from business. Two of them were hit. Of that I am sure. That's why they gave up. Those two men on horseback up about Jackson may have been hit. I don't know. Don't care if they were."

He made good time all the afternoon, and soon knew he was approaching the Crescent City by the number and style of houses he saw on the way.

The farm-houses were larger and in different condition from those further back in the country.

At last he reached Lake Pontchartrain, seven miles from the city.

It was the summer resort of the Crescent City, with fine large hotels, pavilions and bathing-houses.

The moment the tricycle was seen by the people, a shout of welcome went up from all sides. Crowds gathered around to shake hands with him.

"Where are the bicycles?" one asked.

"Somewhere up the country," said Frank, laughing.



"Don't stop me. Let me reach the city and report to the mayor; then I shall be at leisure to talk with you. Which is the direct road to the city?"

"The main big road—all shelled, and as smooth as glass."

"Then I shall reach there in a few minutes," and he darted off at full speed.

The telegraph spread the news through the city that the tricycle had passed Lake Pontchartrain. The mayor and a party of friends entered a carriage to meet him at the city limits.

They met within a quarter of a mile of the line. Frank had crossed the line without knowing it. But he knew he was in the city.

The mayor and his friends stopped him and congratulated him.

"It is now 4:47 P.M.," said the mayor, looking at his watch. "I shall make a record of the time. You have performed a wonderful feat, Mr. Reade. Allow me to escort you to the City Hall, where some friends will welcome you."

"I am in your hands, Mr. Mayor. Here is a note to you from the Mayor of Chicago," and he handed the mayor the note that had been intrusted to him to deliver.

The mayor hastily read the note—a simple little letter of introduction—and put it in his pocket.

As they moved back into the city, a crowd began to gather and cheer. Barney and Pomp ran up to him and shook hands with him.

"Bedad!" exclaimed Barney, "you've bate the blaggards!"

"Are you sure of that, Barney?"

"Yes, sorr. They're clane dead bate, the blaggards."

The people rushed out to see the young hero. His face was bronzed as brown as any Southerner's, but he was as chipper as a sparrow.

By the time he reached the City Hall several thousand people and a brass band were on hand to greet him.

He drove up slowly through the crowd behind the mayor's carriage. The band played and the people cheered themselves hoarse.

The mayor made him get off the tricycle and mount the steps of the City Hall. Waving his hands for silence, the mayor said:

"Fellow-citizens: I have the honor of presenting to you the plucky son of the greatest inventor of the age, Frank Reade, Jr., who has just reached our city after the long race you have heard so much about. It is not yet known whether he has won the race. If he has not it is no fault of his. He has nobly vindicated the utility of his invention, for he has made the trip from the Queen City of the Lakes to the Crescent City in eight days, resting of nights on the common dirt-roads of the country. It was a wonderful feat, and we greet him as a hero!"

The crowd cheered and roared like a sea in a storm, waving hats and canes in the air.

When quiet was restored, Frank stepped forward, and said:

"Fellow-citizens: I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this reception. I did not expect it. I can't make a speech, or I would do so. I will say, however, that I have won the race. I know what the difficulties are

the bicyclists will have to encounter. They can't reach here under three days yet."

As he bowed, a perfect storm of applause greeted him. It was a neat little speech, the first one he ever made in his life. But he was plucky, and made it a rule never to shirk any duty that devolved upon him.

The mayor then took him by the hand and congratulated him again, after which he was escorted to the hotel where he was to stop.

That night it was ascertained that Spreckels and Harrison were in Memphis the night before.

"They can't reach here in two days, then," said Frank.

"How much do you want to bet on that?" a man asked.

"Nothing, sir. I have bet all I care to bet on the race," was the reply.

"You don't think you have won the race, then?"

"Yes, I do—I *know* I have, if it is true that they left Memphis this morning."

"It is true," said the man.

"Then don't bet on their winning, no matter what odds you get."

The man went out, and nothing more was heard of him until Frank happened to recollect having heard his voice before. Then he suspected the man of being the partner of the man Collins, who chased him some ten miles on the Jackson road.

The next morning, Frank had the tricycle washed off, and then gave exhibitions of its speed and workings on the streets of the city. Everywhere, the people received him with cheers.

The day passed without any news from the bicyclists.

But the next day brought a dispatch from Spreckels to Frank, sent from Jackson, Miss., giving up the race.

Frank was not in the least elated. He was sure he had won it, and received the congratulations of the people very quietly.

Then he wrote to the stakeholder in Chicago to give the \$2,000 to the Orphans' Home of that city.

Telegrams came to him from many cities, from people who had won money on the race. Over one hundred thousand dollars changed hands all over the country on the result.

But of all the dispatches he received, one from his father pleased him most. Hear it is:

READESTOWN, May 30.

To Frank Reade, Jr., care Mayor, New Orleans:

"We are all rejoicing over your victory with illuminations and bonfires to-night. You have done nobly.

"YOUR FATHER."

"That does me more good than all the others combined," he said, as he handed it to the mayor to read.

He spent a week in New Orleans, and then returned home, going by steamer up the river as far as St. Louis, accompanied by Barney and Pomp.

At St. Louis he again took the road, and reached Readestown after a pleasant trip through the country.

He had established the superiority of his invention, and contributed two thousand dollars to a worthy charity, and yet he was but nineteen years old. The world has since learned more about Frank Reade, Jr., and his wonderful inventions.

[THE END.]



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